

# JANICE

---

*JUNIE CANDLER GARRETT*

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00019403506

0

FT MEADE  
GenColl





Class PZ3

Book G1878

Copyright N<sup>o</sup> J

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**

























The Glorious Light of a full May Moon fell upon the  
Face of the Prettiest Girl in Town.

*(Janice)*



# JANICE

BY  
JUNIE CANDLER GARRETT



BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO.

835 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

1913



PZ3  
G1878  
J

COPYRIGHT, 1913,  
BY  
JUNIE CANDLER GARRETT



\$ 1.25  
©Cl.A346744  
201



# JANICE

---

## CHAPTER I.

“Alas! How light a cause may move  
Dissension between hearts that love.”

THE glorious light of a full May moon whitened the sanded village street, and fell upon the face of the prettiest girl in town, as she leaned on the gate, awaiting the coming of her sweetheart.

She knew that he would come, for here they had kept tryst “in the gloaming” since they were boy and girl together at school.

What a supremely happy being was this girl,—Janice Grey, to-night! Living the very sweetest time of life, the idol of her home, the belle of the village, and, far beyond and above all else to her, loved by Dick Wynne. Truly life spread out before her full of rich, sweet promise.

Dick came down the street, whistling clearly “In the Gloaming, oh! my darling,” and stopping, he took her hand upon which his ring sparkled, and kissed her red lips. He was a big, handsome fellow, a favorite with all the girls, and a favorite of good fortune too.

He had inherited a nice income, and won the highest honors of his class at college, was adored by the finest girl in the land, and had never lacked for clients since hanging out his shingle as Attorney at Law.



"You can never guess whom I met this afternoon," he said, and without allowing her an opportunity to do so, he told her that their old schoolmate, Bessie Wilson, had come to spend a short time among her friends.

"City life has certainly improved her. I never saw such style; and her beauty is something wonderful. If I had not already plighted troth to another fair lady, I would have surrendered on the spot, and been her captive for the remainder of my life," he declared. "As it was, I only asked permission to take her to the picnic, that we have planned for Wednesday, on the river. You know I will have to show her some attention while she is here. We are such old, old friends. I've asked John Neal to take you, sweetheart. He is the only man I know, that I would be willing to trust you with. He is a loyal friend, and he would never try to steal you away from me."

The cloud that fell upon her face told him plainly that the arrangement did not at all please her. So he tried to appease her by saying: "You know, Janice, that I love you more than all the other girls in the whole, round world put together; that life to me dear, means just *you*; but I don't think that I should be made to give up all of my friends because I happened to fall in love," and he attempted to raise the brown head that had fallen upon the white hands resting upon the top of the gate.

At school and later, he had divided his favors between these two girls. Each one had looked upon the other as a rival. The deeper love of his heart, had really been given to Janice, but he had always admired Bessie greatly. She was pretty and vivacious; danced well, sang charmingly, and had never hesitated to let him know that she cared more for him than for anyone else. Janice had been told by more than one of her friends that she would do well to look to her laurels,—keep both eyes on Bessie Wilson.

When Bessie was bereft of both father and mother,



she had gone to an uncle in a distant city, who had opened his heart, home and purse to her; and, as he had no child of his own, he had cared for Bessie and considered her no burden.

Janice was glad of the good fortune that came to her old schoolmate, and, it must be confessed, she was not at all sorry to have her taken so far away from Dick. She came back frequently however, for, as she said, the village had been her birthplace, and it held ties for her that could never be broken.

John Neal was Dick's very best friend. At school he had fought his battles for him and seemed always to consider it his duty to watch over him. He too, had always loved Janice, but his fealty to his friend would not allow him to speak for himself, and he had retired from the field, and silently worshipped at a distance.

He was only too glad to accommodate Dick by taking his sweetheart to the frolic. It would be such a wonderful pleasure to have her to himself for this one glad day.

After Dick had unfolded to Janice his plans, there was silence between them for a few moments. Then she said, "I will not go to the picnic at all. I really don't care to go, and you will have Bessie with you and will not miss me. I am sure you will have a good time,"—a little tremor in her voice betraying her wounded feelings.

This angered him greatly, and not stopping to weigh the consequences, he said hotly, "You have always been unreasonably jealous of Bessie. You seem to want to make a complete monopoly of me. You are selfish and exacting. I guess it is well for me to learn this before it is too late. I am certain I could never live happily in bondage to one woman."

Without a word, she took his ring from her finger, passed it over the gate to him, went up the walk and into the house, shutting the door behind her.



## CHAPTER II.

AT this Dick Wynne felt that he was an awfully abused man. He went home telling himself that it would be well to teach her a lesson right now. He would take Bessie to the picnic.

He felt sure that Janice would go and he would frighten her into repentance of the way she had treated him by playing the devoted to her rival, and not until she pleaded for his forgiveness, would he return to her. She would then have learned that she could not rule him entirely, and things would run smoothly ever after.

Poor Janice spent a sleepless night. The pretty ruffles on her pillow were crushed by her restless tossing and wet with hot tears. This was the first shadow that had fallen upon her happy dream.

Wednesday came,—a perfect May day,—filled with the melody of birds and sweet with the fragrance of Spring flowers. The sky was blue and cloudless. The young men in shining buggies, drawn by well-groomed horses, dashed about town; and the girls with fluttering hearts and bright ribbons, and baskets filled with dainties, were gathered up, and a merry crowd drove away to the river.

Early in the morning a note came to Janice from John Neal, begging her to reconsider and go with him in his new buggy, promising her all sorts of a good time. She at length consented to go, determined to look her best, be the gayest of the gay, thereby showing Dick that he was not at all essential to her happiness.

John came for her, a happy smile upon his good, kind face.



She wore her prettiest dress, a soft white muslin. She had made it especially for this occasion, and with the setting of each perfect stitch, had gone a sweet and loving thought of Dick. She wore pale pink ribbons with it, and pink gloves covered her dainty hands to keep prying eyes from noting the absence of his ring. Pretty dancing slippers peeped from beneath the hem of her dress, and a white straw hat, covered with apple-blossoms, shaded her brown eyes.

John placed her in his buggy; the high-stepping horse dashed off down the road. The excitement and rapid drive brought a pretty flush to her cheeks, and, when they overtook Dick and Bessie, in a spirit of mischief they passed them, she waving a dainty handkerchief, that wafted to them the delicate odor of wood violets.

"Everyone will wonder that you are with me to-day, and I wonder at my good fortune in being allowed to bring you, too. I can't see how Dick could ever have made up his mind to give you up to me. I would never have been so nice to him, I am sure," declared John.

"He and Bessie have always been the best of friends, you know, and he wishes her visit to be a pleasant one," she carelessly replied.

John looked slyly from the corner of his eye to see if she was really as indifferent as she pretended about it, but she was looking the other way.

They reached the river, Dick and Bessie coming up just behind them.

The strains of a dreamy waltz floated out upon the soft May air. Dick's arm was around Bessie's slender waist, and with her blue eyes looking tenderly into his black ones, they joined the dance, each one the personification of perfect content. John and Janice waltzed too, not a cloud upon the face of either.

In the afternoon Dick and Bessie strolled off alone



to the river. They sat upon a fallen, mossy log, beneath a crab-apple tree. In the branches above them, bees were swarming and droning as they sipped sweets from pink cups, and a tiny, brown bird was merrily singing his Spring song as he sat on a twig, with his head turned to one side, looking at them with bright eyes.

"I would like you to tell me if one of those city chaps has laid siege to your heart and captured it, causing you to forget me," he said.

"I left my heart here with you, when I went away, as you know only too well, Dick. No, neither time nor distance can ever cause me to forget you. But if what I hear is true, it would be far better for me, if I had never known you. I would be happier."

"What can you have heard?"

"Why, that Janice Grey wears your ring, and that she will be your wife in the Autumn."

"She did wear my ring, and there was an understanding that she would be my wife in October, until the evening I met you and asked permission to bring you to this frolic. When I told her of it, she didn't like it; I lost my temper and accused her of being jealous of you, which is true. She gave me back my ring, left me standing at the gate, went into the house and slammed the door behind her. I want to punish her for the way she treated me. Will you wear the ring while you are here?"

She was only too glad to do so. He took it from his vest pocket, held her white hand and slipped the hoop of gold with its lovely gem on her finger. Just as he did this, John Neal and Janice stepped into the path in front of them. They saw it all, turned and hastened away.



## CHAPTER III.

JOHN saw the look of pain and dismay on Janice's face and he said:—"Tell me all about it. I know now why I was allowed to have you with me to-day."

"Don't worry about it a moment, John. I did it all myself. Everything is over between us and it is better for us both that it is so. I know now that we could never be happy together."

He did not rejoice when told that all was at an end between them. He was so unselfish in his love for her that he only thought of her suffering. It never occurred to him that she was now free and that he might honorably woo and, it might be, win her for himself. He tried to console her, as they drove home in the evening, by telling her that "the course of true love never had run smoothly;" that it was only a lovers' quarrel; that "such trials only made the hearts that truly loved, grow fonder," etc.

When he left her, he told her to go to rest and sleep and leave it to him, for he was going to see Dick and straighten it all out for her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shadows were lengthening when Dick and Bessie rejoined the crowd on the river, and someone teasingly told him that Janice had gone with a handsomer man.

Dick drove rapidly to town, left Bessie at the gate and went to his boarding-house and to bed without his supper.

Janice retired early and from weariness fell asleep, but still in her dreaming she was wretched, for she



heard wedding-bells ringing for Dick, and she was not to be the bride.

Two weeks dragged miserably by without a kind or forgiving word from Dick, though she frequently saw him riding or walking with Bessie. Then she was told that her rival had gone home and Dick had gone with her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The June breezes fluttered the streamers of crepe that hung at the door of Janice Grey's home, telling to the passer-by a story of bereavement and sorrow; within was the hush and silence that always enters with death, and the odors of flowers that are never forgotten. Without warning, the mother had been called to pass through the shadowed valley and Janice was alone in the world.

In the darkened parlor, black-robed and heart-broken, her face as white as the roses in the hand of her dead, Dick found her. A great pity and love for her, such as he had never known before, filled his heart. His repentance was deep and sincere.

"Forgive me," he said, as he took her hands and held them. "Let me be with you in your great bereavement to try to comfort and help you to bear it. Forget all my cruel treatment and my life henceforth shall be spent in loving and caring for you."

\* \* \* \* \*

Six months later bells rang out for the wedding, and in the little Church on the hill, these two plighted their vows,—promised to love and live together till death divided them.

After a short wedding trip, they came back to the village and settled down in the home, that had been hers all her life.

\* \* \* \* \*

More than two years have passed and a glance into their breakfast-room, shows them taking their coffee



and cakes. Dick is the same handsome man; he has risen to prominence in his profession; is the leading man in his town. Prosperity dwells with him and Janice is a loving and helpful wife. She is even prettier now in her tasteful house-dress, with a flower in her hair that her husband has just put there,—than she was in her wedding-gown. Sorrow has not stood aloof from her. There are little garments so carefully folded away in a drawer up-stairs and an empty cradle, with an undisturbed pillow, stands in a corner. She has shed many bitter tears above a baby's grave, but she still has Dick. She has been happy with him and she is fully conscious of life's brightness and charm.

Bessie, still Bessie Wilson, is again among her friends in the village. Dick had met her in the drug-store the afternoon before, and they had had quite a lengthy chat and an ice together. She was gloriously beautiful he thought, and he was glad to see her again.

She toyed with a pond lily and holding it up to him, she said that lilies were abundant at Gleason's Pond and asked if he was too much afraid of his wife to take her to gather them, as he had in days of old. His face flushed, he hesitated a moment, for he knew it would not be exactly the proper thing to do. At length he said he would be delighted, and not at all afraid to take her if she wished it. He arranged it all in his mind in a moment. She was stopping with friends in the suburbs of the village, directly on the road to the Pond. Her friends were two old people, who seldom went from home and never gossiped. He could call there for her in his buggy, and no one need know of it. So he made an engagement with her for four o'clock the next afternoon.

After leaving her, he thought of it in a more serious light; thought that one could do nothing in this village without someone finding out all about it, and decided that it would be best to tell his wife of his promise to take Bessie, and ask her to accompany them. He well



knew that she could not do this, for her Missionary Society; of which she was president, was to meet with her at that very hour. He also knew that she would tell him plainly that married men should never go alone with old sweethearts gathering pond lilies. But he meant to go,—Bessie was almost as a sister to him, and he tried to believe that this old friendship would protect her from unpleasant remarks, if anyone chanced to meet them.

As he left the breakfast-table, and gave his wife a parting kiss, he asked: "Would you like to drive out to the Pond this afternoon, take a row and get some lilies? They say the flowers are abundant now,"—he didn't tell her who had said so,—“I can spare the time to-day, don't know when I can have another afternoon off. Am awfully busy right now.”

A glad light came instantly into her face. "It is so nice for you to think of me in this way, Dick; you know I would be delighted to go, we have so very few outings together these busy days; but"—she added sorrowfully, "I can't possibly go; you know my Society meets with me at four o'clock. Can you not manage somehow to take me to-morrow?"

"I will try to arrange it," he said and left the room, whistling.

"Should old acquaintance be forgot?"



## CHAPTER IV.

At the appointed hour he took Bessie in his buggy and drove out into the country. They had not gone far, when they saw John Neal coming leisurely along the road on his horse. They could not avoid meeting him; so Dick held up his head and asked where he had been and Bessie said "Howdye-do," and they passed on.

John did not at all like the looks of things. He knew Dick was inclined to be weak and selfish and Bessie was imprudent, and had no liking for the woman who had taken Dick from her; and that she would be only too glad to make her unhappy. He felt that Janice was too good and true a wife to be treated any way but rightly. He determined to speak plainly to Dick the first opportunity he got.

A little farther on, they met old Mrs. Johnson,— "Aunt Calline," everyone called her. She was the "Good Samaritan" of the village. She nursed the sick, comforted the sorrowing and looked after the needy and friendless. She told them she had been to get "a settin' o' turkey eggs to put under old spec', and asked "where in all creation they were going?" Luckily she didn't wait for them to reply, but whipped up her old gray mare and jogged on to town. She didn't like the looks of things any more than did John Neal, and she rode on, musing on the depravity of men in general and Dick Wynne in particular. She was present when he made his wailing entrance into this world; had put the first garment on his baby body; had corrected and given him good advice during his boyhood, and she



meant to give him a little more of that same kind of advice the very next time she met him.

While she was arriving at this determination, the object of her thoughts was driving along, trying to be interested in his companion's flippant talk, his conscience tugging away at him all the while. He began to feel awfully worried and told himself that he had a d——l of a time trying to get a little pleasure out of his strenuous life.

His companion, noticing his look of discontent, asked if he was thinking of the "raking over the coals" he was going to get, if his wife learned of this trip to the Pond with her. He replied that he guessed he would manage somehow to live through a row, if there should be one. He decided to make the most of the present, brightened up and became as gay as if everything was fixed just to suit him.

They reached the Pond and took seats in the pretty blue pleasure boat. The sunlight fell upon the water.

"The lake, bright rippling to the land,  
"Swayed water-flowers to her white hand."

The cloud lifted from his face entirely. They gathered quantities of the cool, fragrant lilies, sang songs, laughed at pranks he had played at school; talked of the playing at love they had done till he had married. A pathetic little sigh escaped her at the mention of this; there was a quiver about her red lips and a dropping of her prettily-fringed eyelids, that appealed to him. She declared that life was terribly disappointing, and asked if he had not found it so.

"Well, no," he replied. "I have gotten much more out of it than I deserve. Prosperity has come my way; my ambitions have been reasonably gratified and I have a mighty good wife. The only complaint I have to make of her is that she is inclined to be a little jealous and



exacting. Her trust in me is not altogether what I would like it to be. Now I would not care one cent, if she was here alone with John Neal, gathering lilies. He is such an old friend and I trust her implicitly."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Aunt Calline reached home, and placed the the sittin' o' turkey eggs" under old spec', after removing the darning-gourd that the hen had been faithfully covering for three days. She donned a purple calico dress and her Sunday hat, and wended her way to the "Society Meetin'."

Janice had adorned her rooms prettily with roses from her own garden, and jasmine from her porch lattice. In the dining-room, plates were piled high with tempting sandwiches and dainty cakes, and tea and punch stood ready for the refreshing of her guests. She was a cordial and charming hostess.

She called the meeting to order and presided with grace and dignity. After business had been disposed of, she led the way to the dining-room and made everything so pleasant and informal, that everyone began to feel at home, and discuss the news of the village.

One told of the baby that had come to the home of Dr. Jones after a married life of ten years; another of the rumored engagement of Bessie Wilson to a man of great wealth, who lived in a distant city and was old enough to be her grandfather. Miss Liza Smith, a sour old maid, who aways knew more than anyone else in town, and had the longest tongue with which to tell it, nudged her neighbor, and said in a tone too low to be heard by the crowd, but perfectly audible to Dick's wife, who was standing just behind her:—"If he wants her, he had better take her powerful soon, for I saw her and Dick Wynne not two hours ago driving out into the country in the drection of the lily-pond. From all I see and hear, there's going to a mighty big scandal in this



part of the world before long, but the Lord knows I don't want to be the one to start it."

Then, straightening herself up in her chair, and folding her arms within her well-worn plaid shawl, she awaited the effect of this thrust at her hostess.



## CHAPTER V.

A DESPAIRING look came into the face of Dick's wife. Her hands trembled and she dropped her pretty company plate, spilled its contents and broke it into many pieces.

When the last guest had gone, she went into her room and flung herself upon her bed and buried her face in the pillow.

"Oh! Dick," she sobbed, "how could you treat me so? I've loved you so well and God knows I've tried to be to you a good and faithful wife."

Then, woman-like, she tried to find an excuse for him. She told herself that men were not like women; they were of entirely different material; and that in spirit, if not in letter, she knew he was true to her. As he had told her, he and Bessie were such old, old friends. If he had told her, when he asked her to go, that Bessie was going, she would not feel as she did. It was the secrecy about it, that she didn't like. The tear drops fell, one by one, and an ache took possession of her heart, greater than that which filled it when her mother died. She recalled the first cloud that overshadowed her happy way when, as lovers, she and Dick had stood at the gate in the moonlight and she had given him back his ring because he said she was jealous, selfish and exacting. He had told her then, he could "never live happily in bondage to one woman." Bessie was the cause of that trouble, just as she was of this. What should she do? She could never be happy any more if her faith in him was shattered; but perhaps Bessie had asked him to take her and neither of them thought it wrong,—they had



known each other so long. If that was the case, he would tell her all about it and perhaps bring her some flowers when he came to tea. This would make it all right with her, but she would tell him of the gossip of Miss Liza Smith and ask him for her sake, and his own, but more than all for the sake of the good name of the girl, to be more discreet in the future.

So she tried to make it appear all right to herself. She finally remembered that she had allowed her only servant to go out for the evening, and she went to the dining-room and placed bread and butter, cakes and tea ready for her husband's supper; then seated herself on the porch step to await his coming.

The moon came up, full and round. Stars came out and twinkled and sparkled in the sky. Twilight dew fell softly upon the flowers, causing them to throw out all about her their intoxicating fragrance; but neither the glory of the heavens, nor the odor of the flowers in any way appealed to her. She only realized that she was utterly wretched. Neighbor after neighbor passed along, homeward bound, but Dick's familiar step came not. Several times in her impatience and restlessness, she walked to the gate and looked up the street, but he was not to be seen and she sat again on the step, determined to look for him no more.

Just then he lifted the gate latch and came briskly up the walk. He laid his hand upon her head and smoothed her hair gently.

"What! moping, Dearie?" he asked, "or are you sitting here in the moonlight, waiting in imagination for Dick, your sweetheart? Well, he has come in the shape of a very hungry man," and he passed in and seated himself at the table.

She followed, put ice and sugar in his tea; then sat down near him, hoping and half-way believing that he would tell her what she so much wished him to tell.

"I'm dead tired to-night. I've had a hard day," he



remarked, as he looked down, balancing his spoon upon his tea-glass. I think I will turn the office over to John, and run off for a week's rest. I'll go fishing, and get a good draught of fresh, country air. Suppose you go with me. A rest will do you good. You look wearied out to-night,—haven't the least hint of a rose in your cheeks. You must try to keep your roses. Few husbands treasure a faded wife, as they did a faded flower that she gave him before marriage. What do you say about going?"

"Why, that such a thing is out of the question. I have so many baby chickens to look after, and fruit is ripening and I must get busy and store up sweets for the coming Winter. I wish you would go, however, and in passing him to re-fill his glass, she brushed something that looked mightily like the pollen of pond-lilies, from his coat.

"I want to tell you of something that I did to-day, Janice. I'm afraid you will not exactly approve of it, but you know we sometimes just have to do things,—there is no getting around it."

How mean she felt, as she looked into his honest eyes; she drew her chair nearer to hear him tell of the trip to the Pond with Bessie. How gladly she would tell him it was all right with her, and how much more he would love her, when he knew that she trusted him so completely.

"I met my old friend and college mate, Fred Disbro, to-day. You've often heard me speak of him. He is a fine old fellow,—I never loved and trusted another man (with the exception of John; I put him first always, of course,) as I did Fred. He has recently married,—quite a pretty woman his wife is,—he is overworked, and they are going through the country in an auto, hoping that he may regain his health and strength. He said he might possibly stop here for a few days on his return, and I have asked him to stop with us. I want him



to see the prize I so luckily have drawn. Can't you find an extra servant to help with the work, while they are here?"

Tears of bitter disappointment filled her eyes, and she looked down, and traced with a fork the flower on the damask table linen to hide them from him, and said not a word.

"I'm sorry you do not approve of their coming, but don't worry,—I'll get out of it somehow," he said, rather petulantly.

"Oh, I don't at all mind it. Let them come by all means. I can get all the help I need. We want a little company now and then. We grow morbid, living so much to ourselves. I sometimes think we get a little tired of each other."

He gave her a quick glance, got up and left the room.



## CHAPTER VI.

AFTER putting away the tea things, Janice joined him on the porch. He lay in the hammock, with his eyes closed,—a fragrant cigar between his lips. She usually shared the hammock with him in the evening. He would smoke and tell her of his day's doings and any bit of news he had heard, that he thought would interest her. To-night she seated herself on the step, where she had awaited him earlier. He didn't ask her to come to him, but smoked in silence, wondering what could be the matter with her, sitting with her hand supporting her cheek and never uttering a word.

After finishing his cigar, he got up, yawned and said: that he was too sleepy to be good company, so he thought he would retire.

Janice sat for some time after he left her, pondering on the unhappy state of affairs. Her pride would not allow her to reproach him; besides, reproaches, she had sense enough to know, would only drive him farther from her. She was glad he was going on his vacation, a separation she thought, was best for them both, just now. Perhaps "absence would make his heart grow fonder." When at length she went to her room, she found the lamp turned low, and her husband apparently sleeping the sleep of the just.

A few days later, Bessie dropped in to say good-bye. She was going to join friends up in the mountains for a two weeks' stay, before going home. Janice welcomed her in her usual cordial manner, and wished for her a safe and pleasant journey, as she told her farewell. She watched her through the gate as she left, noticing how



slender and full of grace she was, and how perfectly her exquisite and costly dress fitted her.

"Tell Dick good-bye for me," Bessie called back, as she went down the street, knowing at the same time, that his office was to be her next stopping-place. Dick was expecting her, had just sent John out on some flimsy pretext, in order that he might be alone with her.

He held out both of his hands to her, as she came in,—took hers and pressed them warmly.

"I hate to have you go," he told her, "for you will carry away with you all the light and gladness of life for me, leaving me to the night. But for the cruelty of Fate" . . . . he began, and just then John stepped in. He passed her through the door, and, as he did so, said in an undertone, "I will be in the park at seven to say good-bye."

After this good-bye was spoken, with the music of her voice yet ringing in his ear, and the fragrance of the violets that she wore still with him, he went home and took the seat opposite his wife at supper.

The next day he got a letter from his friend, Disbro, saying that he had changed his plans and would not return that way. So he decided to take the rest he had promised himself, and made his arrangements for leaving home on the following Friday. There was a quiet little resort twenty miles away. He had visited it several times, and found it quite a pleasant and restful place. The hotel, though small, was well kept, and in a stream near by fishing was fairly good. He knew that among the guests he was sure to find a congenial man to join him in the sport. The post-office was located in the hotel and he could get news from home and post a letter to his wife without inconvenience.

The afternoon before his departure, Janice got out his small traveling trunk and packed it, putting in everything that she thought he could possibly need or desire. His clothing was in perfect order. There was no need



of hunting buttons to replace missing ones, or hastily sewing up holes in socks that should be properly darned. She was a model wife; she had only to take his garments from his dresser and put them in his trunk. In one of his favorite books, that she knew he would turn to on a lonely or rainy day, she put a picture of herself. It was the first taken of her as a mother, and she held her baby in her arms. It was a pretty picture, taken just when she had reached the happiest period in her life. Dick had admired it greatly and had proudly given it a place on his desk, where it had remained until the death of the baby, when it had been put away out of sight, among other cherished mementoes of the little darling.

This separation from her husband was no light affair to Janice. It was the first of more than a day or two's duration, that had come to them, and she wanted him to think of her, while he was away, and she knew that this picture would appeal to him more strongly than anything else.

When Dick kissed her good-bye, she tried heroically to keep back her tears, but in spite of the effort, they would come. She buried her face on his shoulder, and wept as if her heart would break. He held her close to him for a moment, promised to write frequently, kissed her and hurried away.

She had learned that the best weapon with which to fight off loneliness, was employment. So she tied on a blue sunbonnet and taking a light hoe and rake, she went into her garden.

This little garden was her pride, and had been her refuge in days gone by, when her heart was sad. She had expressed her character too, in the arrangement and planting of it. There were no gaudy or coarse flowers growing there, the border edgings were violets, forget-me-nots and sweet pinks. Mignonette and pale pink and white roses mingled their dainty fragrance with that of star jasmine and heliotrope.



She worked till she grew weary, then sat on a rustic bench under a tree near the gate to rest. She pushed back her bonnet and a few stray locks of damp, brown hair fell across her forehead.

Her eyes still held the sad shadows that Dick's departure had left in them. Altogether, it was a pathetic, as well as a pretty face that John Neal looked into as he came along the walk and took the seat that she offered him beside her.



## CHAPTER VII.

SHE laughingly told him that she was a widow; that she had made things at home so warm for her husband that he had run away and left her.

John told her that before going, he had been more considerate than run-away husbands usually were, for he had left a liberal check for her on his desk; that he had found it after he left and had come to bring it to her.

He chatted with her a half hour,—asked if she was to be entirely alone during Dick's absence. She told him that her servant would remain at night with her; that she was perfectly trustworthy, and as she herself had never been nervous or easily frightened, she had no fear but that she would get along all right.

As he left, he told her to be sure to call on him, "if he could serve her in any way."

That evening, as he sat alone smoking, his thoughts strayed to her. What a true little woman she was, and how in spite of his determination to be loyal to his friend, in spite of his effort to put her out of his heart, he had to confess that she lingered on "Love crowned and garlanded." In the long ago he had thought that she had made an ideal marriage, that she and Dick were created, the one for the other, they had seemed so happy together. This had in a measure reconciled him to his failure to win her for his own life companion; but of late Dick, he thought, had changed in many ways. He was restless and irritable, was careless and indifferent in business matters; and at times he had noticed signs of a too free indulgence in the cup that inebriates; and he



didn't like the intimacy existing between him and Bessie Wilson. After all, he feared that her life was not to be the even, happy one, that he had hoped and anticipated for her.

It looked selfish in Dick to go away, leaving her alone and unprotected. If she had been his wife, he would just have picked her up and carried her with him, and let everything else go; and how clean and pure his every act and thought he would have kept for her dear sake!

So he sat and thought till a late hour.

\* \* \* \* \*

One evening at the end of a week after leaving home, Dick went into the post-office and got a letter from his wife. He read and put it in his pocket and strolled out upon the Hotel verandah. Someone was singing in the parlor a favorite song of his, "Love's Old Sweet Song." The voice was marvellously clear, and he thought it held a familiar tone.

He stepped to the window and looked in and to his surprise, and, it must be confessed, to his pleasure too, he recognized Bessie Wilson in the singer. He went in and joined her in the song and later on was her partner in the dance.

She told him that the friends she had gone to visit up in the mountains grew tired of the solitude, came down to the Hotel and brought her with them. She was greatly pleased to find him there and asked why his wife was not with him.

"She remained at home to feed the chickens and store up sweets for the Winter," he told her.

They planned fishing trips and rides to various points of interest and it was quite late when they said good-night and separated.

Before sleeping, Dick read his wife's letter again. It was not lengthy, but each line betrayed the thoughtful love of a good wife. "Take care of yourself," she wrote,



“don’t weary yourself with too much tramping during the day. Go to sleep with the birds and come home perfectly rested.”

He sat awhile, thinking of her; of her untiring ministrations to him, of her fidelity and affection, and then he thought of Bessie. How strange it seemed that she should come so often and unexpectedly into his life. It really looked as if the hand of fate was concerned in it.

He was tired, but he replied to his wife’s letter before retiring. He and Bessie were going for an early ride in the morning and at a later hour were to have a game of tennis. After that he might not feel like writing,—would perhaps be tired.

He didn’t tell her of his meeting with Bessie. “Women are such curious creatures. No power on earth could convince that wife of mine that our meeting here was not a fixed-up job,” he thought as he finished and sealed his letter.

He was up quite early next morning. The horses he had ordered were in readiness, and just as he put Bessie’s foot in the stirrup, the mail-carrier drove up in his mud-bespattered buggy, for the mail he was to carry to Dick’s home village. He asked if Dick wished to send a message to his wife, and gave him an insinuating wink, as he and Bessie rode off. He put the mail-sack in his buggy and drove away.

Late that afternoon Janice was standing at her gate, when he came along. He inquired after her health and wanted to know why she hadn’t gone “a fishin’ with Dick.”

“Ef you’d a seed him a-dancin’ the Ferginny reel with that purty Wilson gal last night, and a-ridin’ off with her bright and early this mornin’, you’d wish you had,” and, with a loud laugh at the joke, as he thought it, he drove on.

Janice went to the office and got Dick’s letter. It was quite an affectionate affair. He had “missed his



darling more than words could express," and he didn't think it would be possible for him to remain away from her as long as he had intended when he left her. He begged her to be careful of her health for his sake and signed himself "with a heart over-flowing with love, ever and forever yours only, Dick." There was no intimation of Bessie's presence.

Janice left her tea untasted that evening, retired early and cried herself to sleep.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next letter from Dick told Janice that the trip was benefiting him greatly. He felt like another man, and if she was all right and there was nothing in his business demanding his return, he thought he would remain away a week longer.

The reply he got was "Stay by all means." It came to him on a dismal day. The rain was falling in torrents. The drops were dashed furiously against the window-panes by the "wind, that was never weary." He was sitting by the table in his room, and after reading and putting it in his pocket, he opened the book, that his wife had packed for his entertainment on just such a day, and her picture fell out.

He looked at it, and a pang of reproach and self-contempt touched him. Her eyes, so full of sincerity, seemed to plead with him for his return to her. He decided that he had wasted time enough here, and his conscience told him that duty called him home. He determined to do what he knew to be the right thing; got up and immediately began packing his trunk. He had almost finished, when the swish of a woman's silken skirt and the patter of slippered feet, attracted his attention. There was a light tap on his door, and Bessie in pleading tones, begged him to take pity on her, and join her in a game of billiards.

He went down and found her standing forlornly by the window. He stood beside her, and for a time they watched the storm raging so mercilessly without. He took her hand, turned the costly ring on her finger that



the old millionaire had given her and told her how wondrously well a pretty ring became a pretty hand. He also told her that he was going home on the morrow, and asked if she would miss him.

She covered her face with both hands and sobbed.

"Miss you?" she exclaimed. "How can you ask me that? You know that there is not a single moment, when I am absent from you, that I do not miss you. How can I ever go back to a life without you, after these blissful days that I have spent with you? I have tried to forget that you had another tie. I've tried to persuade myself that every throb of your heart was for me, as mine are all for you. Let this last gleam of happiness abide with me a little longer. Dick, don't go just yet."

He took her handkerchief and wiped away her tears, replaced a wisp of her golden hair that had become disarranged and just then the door was opened and a servant came in to light the room.

He led her to the billiard table, gave her a cue, rolled the balls together and they began the game. When he returned to his room he unpacked his trunk. He had decided to remain longer.

\* \* \* \* \*

When his wife learned that his stay was to be prolonged, she gave up and went to bed. The constant worry and sleepless nights had done their work and she found herself really ill.

The next day was Sunday. She let her servant off for the day, closed the house and in her loneliness and desolation she was a forlorn object to behold.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What a dandy mornin', the whole big world looks like it's brimful and a runnin' over with joy," exclaimed Aunt Calline, as she went to the cowpen with a bucket of peas and bran for Brindle, the sleek, fat cow standing



at the fence chewing her cud, while she waited for her breakfast. Aunt Calline said she never did things by halves. When she fed her cow, she fed her all she needed, and Brindle gave to her mistress in the same generous way.

The old lady took her seat on the milking-stool and her pail was soon full to overflowing with rich, yellow milk. She went back to the house, singing in a squeaky voice.

“How firm a foundation  
“Ye Saints of the Lord,”

a happy old soul, striving day by day to do her duty to her God and her neighbor.

As she strained the milk into the bright tin pan, the gate-latch clicked and Sammy Roberts, a freckled face, red-headed boy, came slowly up the walk.

“Howdy-do, Sammy. Come right in and have breakfast with me,” she said cordially. Sammy had his toe tied up in a pink calico rag. He limped into the kitchen and sat down upon a kindling-box in the corner.

A fat yellow kitten got up and rubbed herself lazily against his legs. A pot of corn meal mush was cooking on the hearth, a big iron spoon lying across the top, handy for stirring it. The old lady busied around, grinding coffee and slicing bacon for the meal.

Sammy was hungry. He had not broken his fast that morning. He took the spoon from the top of the pot and began eating the mush greedily.

“Are you a-goin’ to set thar, and eat up all of old Uncle Moses’ poultice, son?” asked Aunt Calline.

The spoon dropped instantly into the pot, scattering its contents in all directions. The kitten got a share and hoisted her back and scampered out into the yard. A good portion fell on the boy’s foot and he hastily brushed it off with one hand, while he emptied the contents of his mouth into the other.



"Oh, you can eat it, Sam,—it's plum' clean, hain't never been used. I'm goin' to take it to the poor sufferin' old man, when we get through with breakfast."

She placed the bacon and eggs and hot "muffin bread" on the table, and after a fervent "Good Lord, make us thankful," she filled Sammy's plate and told him to "eat and eat a plenty."

As she cleared away the empty dishes, she told him he had better run along home and get ready for Sunday School.

"I don't reckon I'll go to-day," he said. "We've got so much trouble at our house."

"Got trouble, have you? Well, it 'pears to me like that is the very time you want to serve and stick to the Lord, for it shorely is the time you need Him to stand by you. What kind of trouble has you-ens got?"

"Why, hain't you heered that Pa is busted, Aunt Cal-line?"

"Busted! Land alive! What busted him, Sam?"

"I don't know. I just heered him tell Ma it was a-doing by his neighbor as he would want his neighbor to do by him."

"Well, ef that's what busted him, the Good Lord'll patch him up all right agin soon," she affirmed, as she drew on her home-knit gloves, took up the bucket of mush and went out of the house.

She delivered the poultice for Uncle Moses' hand, guaranteeing it to draw out the "last spec' of information," then went on home with Sammy. His mother met them at the door, with a fretting baby in her arms, and two little girls, with a troubled look in their pretty blue eyes, following her.



## CHAPTER IX.

"GOOD-MORNIN, Sallie. Hope you are feelin' fine and dandy this nice day," she said cheerfully.

"Oh, Aunt Calline, haven't you heard of our trouble,—how we've lost all we've saved up by stinting and doing without? We've worked mighty hard, and just as we thought we had enough laid by to send the children to school looking like other children, and we felt like we could take life a little easier, it has all been taken from us and what we will do, I can't see."

"Why ef you made that, you kin jist git bizzy again, and make more, can' you, Sally? Where's Jim?"

"He is in bed. Says he hasn't the heart to get up."

"Is he asleep?"

"Law, no! He's too worried to sleep or rest."

"Well, in my opinion, he'd better git up and look about him and try to fix things up. Lyin' in bed and kiverin' up the head, never yit mended a busted concern. Had his breakfast?"

"No, he said he couldn't eat a bite."

"Land alive! I'd like to know what kind of a tussle he expects to make with trouble on an empty stomach."

She pulled off her gloves and tucked up her skirt and went to the kitchen and beat up a bowl of "flap-jack" batter, and made a pot of coffee and told the little girls to set the table for breakfast. She called to Jim to get up and come out and "look at the sunshine the Good Lord was a sendin' down upon this beautiful world, for His creeturs to enjoy."

Jim soon came out. He was a frail looking man, the lines in his face and stains of toil on his hands, telling



of the struggle he had made to earn an honest living for his family. He joined his wife at the table. Aunt Calline brought hot, buttered "flap-jacks" and poured the coffee, chatting pleasantly all the while.

The meal finished, she asked if the children were going to Sunday School.

"I guess not. It is late, and they are not dressed," said the mother.

"I'll fix 'em. Come on Sarah and Mattie; let git your Sunday finery on in a jiffy. Fetch the comb," and without regard to the frowns on the little faces, she pulled and combed and plaited the soft, silky hair and tied on the ribbons.

"Put up your foot, Sarah; we'll have to shine up your shoes a bit," and she took a bottle from the shelf.

"There ain't a drop o' polish here, child."

"No, I used the last on baby's shoes," said Mrs. Roberts.

"Got any 'namolene?" asked the old lady and she bustled off to the kitchen and returned with a box of enameine and vigorously polished the half-worn shoes; then told the children to run along to Sunday School and thank God they were livin'.

"Now set down, Jim and tell me all about it. Light you pipe. A man in trouble wants his pipe."

Jim smoked and between puffs told her just how bad it was. He had aided a friend in his difficulties by endorsing notes for him, and his friend had gone back on him by running away and leaving the debt for Jim to pay. To do this, he would have to let his shop go and then he didn't know where to turn.

"How much money will you need to fix it all up?" she asked.

He told her that with what he had already, that he had saved up, he guessed about Seven Hundred Dollars.

"I've got that much that I hain't got a spec' of use for. I'll lend it to you and when you git on your feet



again, you can pay it back. I ain't a bit afeared of you. Your word is as good as your bond, if not a leetle bit better. Cheer up! You've got a heap to be thankful for. You've got a whole lot left,—a wife's that's a sight too good for you—and your children. Here's Sam, (as he came around the house,) as fine a boy as lives."

Sam, seeing the cheerful air things were taking on, forgot his stubbed toe, skipped around and said he was thankful he had his billy-goat left.

Aunt Calline didn't get to Sunday School that morning, but she brushed up and went to preaching. She had her own particular seat in the Amen corner, where she could hear all the preacher said and see everybody come in. On this occasion, when she went in, she nodded to several friends, seated herself, put down her parasol and opened her "Gospel Hymns," and when old Brother Driscoll began to sing in a pitch so high that few in the congregation could reach "Will there be any stars in my crown?" she joined in and got right to the top with the good old man.

After the benediction, she went into the Church-yard to the grave of her lamented husband, who (the stone at his head said) had departed this life full of faith, leaving behind a loving wife to mourn his loss. All of this was true.

John Neal strolled out and joined her.



## CHAPTER X.

THEY discussed the sermon they had just heard, and spoke of the need of rain.

Aunt Calline seated herself on a bench she had placed near by to rest on, while she meditated on the many virtues of the dear departed. She asked John to sit by her, for she wanted to speak confidentially to him about something that had worried her no little.

He took out his knife and began cutting on a twig that he had picked up and told her to proceed to state her cause for worry.

"Do you know whar Dick Wynne is?" she asked.

He told her where he was.

"Yes," she said, "he is thar, and he ain't thar by hisself nuther. He is thar a-galavantin' with that thar Wilson gal, a-dancin' and a-gallopin' all over the country with her, while that poor little wife of his'n is at home all by herself a-grievin' and a-troublin' about him. You've allus been a good friend to him, and I've been one too, till here lately. I hope you won't fall out with me, if I speak a little bit plain to you, now John. You know I'm a plain-speakin' old woman. I know you used to love Janice yourself and moreover I know that you love her yit, for true love is as enduring as that mountain a-standin' out yonder. Like that mountain too, it sometimes throws a mighty long shadder over a man's life but it stays right thar all the same. I wish you had a-married her, for you would a-had enough good sense to have knowed her worth. I love her too, and long years ago, I promsed her Ma that if I lived after she had died,—I would look after her jist like she was my



own child, and I can't remember the time, when I forgot or failed to keep a promise as sacred as one made to the dead. Ef somebody don't interfere and help her to straighten things out, she's a-goin' to have a lot of bad trouble, and I don't know any two people in the world, that have got a better right to do this, than you and me, and I want to know what you think we'd better do about it."

John acknowledged that he had been worried about the conditions also, but said it was a delicate matter to meddle with, and he hardly knew what to suggest. He told her to drop in on Janice that afternoon, and try to cheer her up a bit, and he would think the matter over and see what they could do.

The old lady left John whittling and went home. She put fresh water in the chicken trough, fed her cats, and took a slice of bread and butter and a glass of cool buttermilk herself. She then lay down on her couch and pulled a light patch-work quilt, (she called it "The Lone Stair of Texas") over her feet and shut her eyes.

She was not asleep every time her eyes were shut, she often said. The most of the time she was "a-ponder-in'," and she was "a-ponderin' right now."

After an hour's rest, she "slicked her hair," closed her door and went down to Dick Wynne's house. She knocked at the front door, but no one came, so she went around to the back and called Janice, who told her, with her voice full of tears, to come in.

"I didn't see you at meetin' to-day. I knowed Dick was gone and I thought mebbly you was sick, so I come to see about you," the old lady said, as she entered the darkened room.

Poor Janice had reached the point in her trouble, when she had to tell it to someone, and get sympathy somewhere. Aunt Calline was the one above all others, that she felt willing to confide in. She knew she would



get all the sympathy she needed from her and she told her the whole sad story.

Aunt Calline drew her chair close to the bed, and took one of Janice's little hands in a caressing, motherly way. Then she asked: "What are you going to do about it Honey? Air you jest agwyne to lie in this here bed and cry and when Dick comes home, have him contrastin' your red eyes and washed out face with that Wilson gal's purty blue eyes and peach-blossom cheeks? What do you think you'll gain by that?"

In her heart she thought Dick the very meanest man that the Good Lord allowed to live, but she knew she would not mend matters by telling this to his wife. So she said he was just like a lot of other good men, having a good time without meaning to do wrong, and not knowing how she felt about it.

"Folks is powerful curious creeturs,—women as well as men. They don't allus mean to lie and do wrong, when they air a-doin' both. Now I got a message not long ago from Lindy Green. She lives out in the naberhood of that little Baptist Church,—Hominy Grove they call it. The folks livin' out thar air all hard workers and God fearin', and them kind allus prospers. They have big farms and dairies. They air sorter arstercratic too,—try to keep right alongside town folks. They heered o' the rummage sale we-uns had last year, when we made money enough to finish payin' for our Church organ, and they concluded to rummage round and see if they could make enough to paint up their Church. This message I got from Lindy was to let me know about it, and to ax me to go out and carry some of my friends and a bundle o' rummage, if I felt disposed to help 'em. I got several of the gals to promise to go along with me and then I looked about the house to see ef I could find anything anybody would want. I had a pair o' pillow shams, worked in turkey



red, with 'Good-night' on one of 'em and 'Pleasant Dreams' on t'other. They was real nice, but I never did care for shams. I tuck them, and then I thought of Josiah's trunk a-settin' in the back room, and I opened it, and got out his old brown hat and striped weskit.

"You know these garmints, that have been worn day by day by our folks, that have gone away from us, never to come back,—clothes that we have cried over and folded keerfully away, bring 'em back to our mind's eye, when we unfold and bring 'em out to the light agin. Well, I could see Josiah jest as plain going to the barn with a basket o' corn on his arm, a-callin' 'Pig-gee, piggie!' with that yaller weskit on and that hat pulled down over his eyes to keep the wind outen 'em. I couldn't begin to keep the tears outen mine, when I looked at these things, that jest seemed to be a part of my dear old man, but I know'd he had on all the garmints he'd ever need, and I thought that mebbby they would do some other old man some good, so I tuck 'em along. When we got out to the storehouse, whar the sale was to be, we found Miss Liza Roberson. She's the president of the 'Young Helpers', and takes a sight of intrust in the Church work, and little Nettie Bell, a powerful little mite of a gal, but a mighty worker in the vineyard of the Lord, and Sallie Gilmer. She's the oldest gal in the Church, countin' her years but the youngest one in the way she dresses and sprys around. I heered somebody say that day at the sale that she made a dead set at and almost tormented the life outen every paster that had ever been called to lead the flock, that didn't already have a wife to torment him. I didn't believe all of that, but I did see her a-settin' on the front bench, looking up at Brother Watts,—he's the present paster, and lost his wife about three months ago,—a-singin' as loud as she could holler,

'All along my pilgrim journey  
'Only let me walk with Thee.'



"There was a whole lot more folks thar, and sech a lot o' things to sell you never did see got together I reckon. There was old saddles and coffee mills and strings o' red pepper and dried sage and pop-corn and odd cups and sassers and baby caps, and parasols, and turn-over collars and the Good Lord only knows what else.

"Them gals was a-holdin' up the old cast-offs, a-praisin' 'em, tellin' how useful and fine they was, and what bargains, tryin' to persuade folks to buy 'em. One of 'em sot a little red hat about as big as a plate on top o' my head, and helt up her hands and 'Oh, my'd,' and said it was shorely the becominest thing I ever had on in all my life. I went to a lookin' glass to see what I looked like, and I looked like a plum fool. While I was a-lookin' at and a-pityin' myself, another gal came along and wanted to sell me a red satin dress to wear with it. I got mad at fust to think they tuck me for sech a senseless old creetur, and then I thought how I would look a-settin' up in my Amen corner at church in that rig, and I got tickled and in a good humor.

"I got rid of the gals by buying some of the red pepper and sage for sausage meat, and a red flowered poke to tote my knittin' in. Now you know them gals know'd how I'd look in that old finery and was a-laughin' at me all the time they was a-tryin' to fool me into buyin' it. They was a-lyin' and a-tryin' to deceive me, but they didn't think of it in that way. What they was a-doin', they thought was all right, for they was a-doin' it for righteousness' sake.

"Now, it looks to you as if Dick is off yonder a-treatin' you mighty mean, but he don't intend to do wrong. He loves you jest like he allus did, and you can mighty soon open his eyes and make him see how it raly is, by jest givin' him a dose of his own medicine. Primp up and look pretty; get out and flirt a bit yourself, and I guarantee that will bring him right squar' to his senses."



“Oh! Aunt Calline, how could I ever do such a thing? I would lose all of Dick’s respect, as well as his love and get myself talked about.”

“Law! Who’s a-goin’ to dare to talk about you, Honey? Don’t everybody in this town know that you are as pure and spotless as an angel in Heaven, and Dick shorely wouldn’t be mean enough to fall out with you for doin’ the very thing that he is a-doin’ himself. Be a sensible woman. Take hold o’ things and straighten ’em out, and keep your husband from goin’ to the old scratch, ef you can.”

“Don’t quarrel and nag at him, when he comes back. Fussin’ with a man, only makes him wuss. I had a good man; leastways he was good as the average. We had the happiest home on the face of the yearth. Josiah wasn’t one o’ the kissin’ kind. They are the very ones to keep your eye on, but he toted in the wood and water, and was a good provider. We never had but one little spat, endurin’ the whole thirty years we boarded together. I’d been a-washin’ and a-scrubbin’ one day, and was plum tuckered out. I got a short supper, and washed up the kitchen things, and went into our room and got the Bible and sot down in my big cheer, all ready to read my chapter. We read a chapter in the Good Book every night before we went to bed. Josiah would read one night and I would read the next,—and to-night was mine. I axed if thar was any particular chapter he would like me to read, and he never answered a word. I axed him agin, and he didn’t speak, but jest sot thar a-readin’ the newspaper like he didn’t care ef he never agin read anything any better than that paper. I got up and tip-toed around behind him, and looked over his shoulder to see what was a-absorbin’ him so, and, bless your life, it was a big scandal. A preacher had run off with another man’s wife, and left his own and four little children to hustle fer themselves. I don’t think it does a man a spec’ o’ good to read sech



trash, and I didn't want Josiah to read it, 'specially when he 'peared to take sech an intrust in it. I went back to my cheer and sot down and commenced to ax him all sorts o' questions. I axed him if the turnips was a-comin' up behind the barn, and if Davy White had ever paid him for the spotted yearlin' he sold him three year back, and whar he was a-goin' to bank the taters when he dug 'em, and a whole lot more questions. He would hold his finger on the line he was readin' and look up at me, and spit in the fire, and turn back agin to the paper. After a while he got sorter rattled, and said powerful short for him: "Old woman, I wish ter goodness you'd shet up, or go to bed; one or t'other.

"I did shet up, and I rocked mighty lively for a minit, fer a woman, who'd been a-washin' and a-scrubbin' all day. I laid my head back, and shot my eyes, and all of a sudden a thought struck me, and I jumped up and went to bed and left him to kiver up the fire. You see, I knowed if thar was one thing he did hate to do, it was to bank the fire. When he come to bed, he looked over at me and said: 'Old lady, don't you 'low to go to sleep to-night? I see you've gone to bed with your specks on.' I was in sech a hurry to git to bed, I had fergot to pull 'em off. I didn't say a word to him, but turned over and tuck all the kiver I could carry along with me. The next mornin' I hunted up that paper, and after I read it myself, I laid it over behind the fire. That was our first and last scrimmage.

"Well, Honey, it's gittin' late. I must go home and milk Brindle, and git ready fer night meetin' and you must git up and go out fer a little fresh air and exercise; and when Dick comes home, jest give him a dose out of his own bottle, and let me know how it serves him, and ef I can help you in any way . . . ."

The old lady bowed herself out with a reassuring nod.



## CHAPTER XI.

JANICE changed her wrapper for a fresh white dress, gathered a basket of flowers and started to the cemetery.

John Neal was standing on the street and when she came up to him, he took the basket and said he would go with her, if she didn't object.

He watched her place the roses on the little mound that held so many of her broken hopes, and so much of her mother love.

On their return he stopped awhile. The house was unlighted. It looked empty and lonely and her face was full of sadness. He felt awfully sorry for her; and nothing would have given him more genuine satisfaction right then, than to have been able to tell Dick Wynne just what he thought of him.

"I had a letter from your husband last evening," he said. "He writes that he will be away a week longer. He asked me to drop in and see if you were all right. Sister Edith has been wanting me to bring her around for several evenings to sit with you. If you have nothing better to do, suppose I bring her to-morrow evening. She has a lot of new music. She can bring it and we can learn some of the songs to sing for our truant, when he returns. I have several new books too. I have looked over them, and one or two of them promises to be right good. I will let you have them, if you wish to read them."

"That will be fine. Now, don't disappoint me to-morrow evening. I shall certainly expect you," and she smiled as he went away, and she thought of Aunt Caline's advice. She had already taken a walk with John and made an engagement with him for a call.



Toward the end of the week, she got a letter, telling her to expect her husband home on Tuesday of the next week.

There was quite a crowd of the young folks going on horseback to some mineral springs six miles from town on that afternoon, and she had promised to chaperone them. Dick would come with the mail-carrier, and it was usually late, when he came in, and she thought she could get back by the time Dick reached home. So she kept her promise and went, and John was her escort.

When Dick came, which was earlier than usual, for Jesse Morgan, and Jim, his old gray horse, had not had much mail to deliver on the route, and had made better time; instead of finding a pretty wife, eager to welcome him after a month's absence, he found the front door closed and locked.

He went around to the kitchen, where the cook, with her skirts tucked up, was scrubbing the floor, and singing at the top of her voice:

"Whar you gwynne to hide, when the Lord comes down?"

She told him that his wife had gone off to the Springs with Mr. John; that it was a good thing he had come home, for that man had almost been a-livin' thar, while he had been gone.

He wondered what she meant, as he went into his room. He looked suspiciously at a vase of city-bred carnations on the dressing-table. He threw his hat on the bed, his umbrella on the floor, and kicked over his wife's wicker work-table, scattering thread, thimble and scissors in all directions.

Janice's blue morning sacque was hanging on a chair, and one of her little slippers, with a hole in the toe, peeped out at him from under the side of the bed. He kicked it out of sight, and he swore a little.

He washed his face, brushed his hair, put on a clean collar and went to his office. Just as he reached it, he



saw the crowd returning from the Springs. He stopped on the step to await them, but his wife was not with them,—coming up ten minutes later. Her saddle-girth had loosened, she had stopped for John to tighten it, and the crowd had left them.

He had never seen her look prettier or happier. The blue habit that she wore,—he noticed it was a new one,—her jaunty cap, her well-fitting gloves and pretty riding whip; the rosy flush in her cheeks and brightness in her eyes, made of her a picture well worth looking at.

She gave him a careless greeting; said she supposed he would be home to supper, and that she would have John remain and share it with them,—and then she left him.

When he reached home, he found John making himself very much at home in the hammock, and his wife, in a girlish muslin dress, with one of those “city-bred” carnations in her hair, standing by him.

He went into the house, expecting her to follow and give him the welcoming kiss he had a right to expect, but she didn't follow and he returned to the porch.

Janice was a good housekeeper. The silver, china and glass on the tea-table this evening were brightly polished, and the bill-of-fare comprised a variety of dainty and well-prepared dishes; but Dick was a sullen and sombre host at his own board.

Neither his guest nor his wife appeared to notice it, however, but chatted and laughed in a manner that was quite exasperating to him. The meal finished, he went back to the porch, lighted a cigar and paced restlessly back and forth across the floor.

His wife went into the parlor, and John joined her at the piano. She played well and looking through the half-turned blinds, he watched them, as they sang together:

“Tell me that you love me once again.”



He grew furious, angry with the man, and angrier with his wife. He threw away his half-smoked cigar, thinking he would go in and put a stop to that "sicken-  
ing love song." She had no business to be singing it with any man.

All at once, it occurred to him that he had sung the same song with Bessie Wilson the afternoon he carried her to gather pond-lilies, and he recalled that on that occasion he had declared that his faith in his wife was perfect, that he would trust her anywhere, with anyone.

The song ended. John said "Good-night" and went away. Janice watched him down the walk and through the gate, as she sat on the door-mat.

Dick was the first to break the silence, when he said: "How did you spend your time while I was away, Janice, and did you miss me?"

"I found the home rather empty and lonely the first few days, and the evenings were a little long, but John and Edith took pity on me, and came to the rescue. We learned several new songs, and John read aloud two or three exceptionally good books. He is a delightful reader. His tone is low and soothing and he reads with so much expression. We played crokinole, (he had often heard her say she detested the game) took rides and last night went out to Gleason's Pond for a row. Wasn't the moon glorious at eleven o'clock? We found and gathered a few lilies."

He suddenly sat up and said: "You surely didn't go rowing alone with that man at night, did you, Janice?"

"We were not exactly alone. Joe Graham and Edith drove out with us, and took a boat and went to the upper end of the Pond. John and I anchored, and gathered the few lilies I have told you we found. "We sang a little,—doesn't John sing well? Being alone with a man, not my husband, under such romantic conditions, made me feel almost a girl again. You don't care for



me going with John, do you dear? You know we are such old, old friends?" she asked, as he strode into the house without replying.

He went to his room and sat down by the window, putting his feet up on the sill.

"This thing is getting salty," he soliloquized. "I know she's all right, but there are always gossips around, and I don't care to have my wife talked about in a disagreeable way. John is a good enough fellow, I reckon, but I didn't know how blamed good-looking he was, till to-night. These serious looking men with dreamy eyes, who sing sentimental songs, are just the men to win the love of women. I don't think John acted exactly right in taking my wife to that Pond last night, especially as I was away . . . . (at the hour of twelve that same night, he, himself, was out under the silent stars, pressing the pretty hand of Bessie Wilson, in a tender farewell). Janice is a confiding, affectionate little creature, just the kind of a woman to be unsuspectingly led off the right track. Oh, pshaw! what am I thinking about!"

He beat a hasty retreat from his own thoughts, but the sleep he slept that night, was, to say the least, unrefreshing.



## CHAPTER XII.

THE following afternoon he stood at his office window, thinking of his wife and wondering what could be the matter with her. She hadn't seemed as glad to have him back, as he had thought she would be. She was showing an indifference toward him, that was new, and he didn't like it.

He thought he would go home early and take her for a drive. He hadn't done such a thing for so long; perhaps he had neglected her too much.

Just then, she and John went galloping by, followed by Joe Graham and Edith.

"I'll swear! Another ride, and she never spoke to me at dinner of going!" he exclaimed.

He felt perfectly outraged, was angrier than he had ever been before in all his life. He took several rapid turns across the floor, then threw himself down upon a lounge, and didn't get up till the room was in darkness. He supposed his wife had returned by then, and he closed his office and went home.

There was no light in the front of the house. He opened the door and entered, falling over a rocker in the hall. He struck a match and lit the lamp, and went to the kitchen and inquired of the cook if his wife had not returned.

"Lor', no. It ain't time fer her yit. Miss Janice sholy does ride late. She told me to give you your supper. Set down to the table and I'll bring it."

She put the meal before him, and just as he took



up his knife and fork, his wife came in with her arms full of ferns and wild roses.

"I'm late," she said. "We rode farther than we thought. Just see these roses! Aren't they the very loveliest? John faced a nest of hornets to get them for me."

"He'll face something a long sight more formidable than hornets before he gets much older. He'll face a loaded gun, and you will be up against the biggest scandal this town has ever heard of," and without eating a morsel, he left the house, and paced the front walk for an hour.

When he came in again, his wife was putting the finishing touches to a blue straw hat. She draped a veil on it, put it on her head, and standing in front of the mantel mirror, she surveyed it, complacently turning her head from side to side.

"You certainly take this affair coolly, but, when I put a bullet into the heart of that big idiot, who only means your ruin, it will be quite a serious matter," he told her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Aunt Calline nearly always planned her day's work before she got up in the morning. When she didn't, she went helter-skelter through the day, doing everything she should not do, and leaving undone half that she should do.

"Jeff Davis," her big red rooster, invariably crowed at the first peep of day, and she always heard him, and lay in bed, and made her program for the day.

On this particular morning, she planned to get through all necessary work as early as possible, and then make some "duty visits." She had heard that Jesse Morgan was sick in bed; hadn't carried the mail for a whole week. She would go and see him, and then "drop in and see how Dick Wynne's wife was a-makin' it."

She put a print of fresh yellow butter, and a bottle of



sweet milk in a basket, and soon after breakfast, started out.

She noticed, before she had gone very far, several little boys throwing rocks, and beating with sticks among some briars at the side of the road; they were laughing loudly, evidently having a lot of fun. She stopped to learn the cause of their merriment, and she saw three tiny kittens, crouched down in the thickest of the growth. They were scared almost out of their wits, and were so starved that they looked as if they hadn't strength to get upon their feet.

She asked the boys if they had never read in the Good Book, where it said that "Blessed are the merciful," and told them that even little cats belonged to God's creation, and that boys who tormented them, were "shure to burn in that terrible lake of brimstone."

She then drove them away and got the kittens out from the briars, put them in her apron, and went on to Jesse Morgan's.

She gave his wife the butter and milk she had brought, and put the kittens in her empty basket, and set it under the side of the bed. While she inquired how the sick man was feeling, and telling of her rescue of the poor little cats, that some "inhuman wretch had taken from their mother, and throwed in amongst the thorns to starve to death," the kittens began to cry piteously. An old gray cat came to the door, looked in and ran to the basket, and got in with the kittens and began to fondle and nurse them.

Aunt Calline understood it all in a moment, and in her indignation she said: "Miss Morgan, them's your little cats." Mrs. Morgan owned up, said they were hers, but it was all she could do to feed her six children, and she couldn't afford to keep a drove of cats, but as long as Aunt Calline had found and brought them back again, she would keep them and do the best she could for them.

The old lady told her no, she would take them home



with her, and when they got fat and strong, she would find good homes for them. She left, and went down to Dick Wynne's house.

"Come right in, Aunt Calline. You are the very woman I want to see. You've gotten me into a dreadful scrape with your advice, and now you must tell me how to get out of it," were Janice's first words, as she opened the door. "You know you told me to primp up, and look pretty, and get out and flirt a bit to bring Dick to his senses. I haven't exactly flirted, but I've gone with John Neal some. He's the only man on earth, that I would have gone with, for he is all right, and he knows I am too. Dick has grown awfully jealous; has even hinted at shooting John. I am so afraid he will do something rash, and he is so wretched,—doesn't eat or sleep,—I must explain things to him. I can't live, knowing how angry he is with me."



## CHAPTER XIII.

JANICE told her what had transpired the evening before, and said: "Aunt Calline, don't you think I have punished him enough?"

"No, no, Honey,—give him another dose of his own medicine. He hain't had enough yet. One dose of anything jest stirs a-body up and makes 'em feel bad, but give two or three doses, and it cleans out the system, and does a sight o' good. It does more good, tuck on a empty stomach too; so don't worry if he don't eat. His appetite will come back to him all right, when he gets through with the course. Don't you worry, Honey. Don't you let up yit. Thar's nothin' like bringing things home to folks."

After this additional advice, she took her "little cats", and went home.

On the morning of this same day, Dick went to his office. He found John already there. He took the mail from him, scarcely responding to his "Good-morning." He began looking through the letters, and suddenly his face reddened, and he hastily thrust one of them in his pocket.

He had stopped at a saloon on his way as he came down town, and had taken just enough brandy to excite him and make him care little for what he might say.

He asked what had been done during his absence.

John said: "Not much of anything." The weather had been awfully hot, and he had been half sick, and had not tried to stir up much in the way of business.

"I think you have been too busy looking after my wife, to do anything else," Dick said hotly.



John gave him a look, and saw that he was in an ill-humor, and had really meant to insinuate that he had acted dishonorably. This vexed him, and he decided that the occasion was a fitting one for giving him the plain talk he had promised Aunt Calline that he would give him.

"You know that you wrote me to look in on your wife, Dick, and see if she was all right. I did so, and found her entirely alone, and apparently a little gloomy. I pitied her, and being your friend and hers, I only felt that I was doing what was my duty in looking after her as I did. In fact, I thought it was what you would wish, and expect me to do."

"Are you sure that the sentiment, that prompted the attention you gave her, was pity and friendship,—nothing warmer?" he then asked.

"Dick, I will acknowledge that in days gone by I loved her, you also knew it,—but when I saw that she reciprocated the love you gave her, and that you seemed so suited to each other, and so happy together, I tried to suppress this love, and while my heart was full of bitter disappointment, I felt glad for you, and did all that I could for you. I was your friend then, loyal and true. I did not try to win her from you, when you were her lover. Do you think I would do so now, when she is your wife?"

Dick put his thumb to his lips, and assumed a thoughtful attitude.

"Now, Dick, that I've begun, I'm going to talk seriously to you. Do you realize that you are standing on the very brink of a precipice; that you are about to plunge into absolute ruin?"

"What do you mean, John? What are you talking about?"

Well, in the first place, you are drinking too much. The habit is getting a hold on you, that must be broken at once, or you are doomed. And furthermore your



domestic happiness is threatened by that affair with Bessie Wilson. Your wife knows all about it. Now, for God's sake, man, stop and look about you before it's too late! Think of all you have to make you happy,—the incentive to do what is right. Let your manhood assert itself. Be all that you are capable of being, old man," and he took Dick's trembling hand.

Dick broke down completely at this, and said: "What a fool I've been, John. Of course, I know that you are honest and true, through and through. Stand by me, and help me to reclaim myself, and I promise to turn over at once a new, clean leaf."

When John left the office, Dick took his letter from his pocket, and read it. It was from Bessie. She wrote that she had postponed her wedding-day, and would be in the village the following week.

"I must see you once more before I go out into the blackness of a life with that old Idiot," she declared.

He knew that he should write her not to come, and tell her of his promise to turn over the new clean leaf,—but he did not,—and the next Friday, as he waited in the post-office for the opening of the mail, she came in, and held out to him her slim white hand. He got his letters, and they passed out on to the street. The sun had gone down, and the shades of evening were gathering in the little park as they entered it, and seated themselves on a bench. There was silence between them for a time. A cricket chirped noisily in the grass at their feet, and a family of sparrows fell out, and chattered crossly in the tree-tops above them.

With a sob in her voice, she finally said to him that he didn't appear to be glad that she had come.

"No," he said, "I must admit that I am not. I think that the time has come when the parting of the ways is best for us both. Neither of us is getting any good or happiness out of this affair. I have a good wife, and her faith in me is terribly shaken. I must settle down to a



steady, better life, and try to reinstate myself in her confidence and respect. My practice has fallen off of late, because I've neglected it, and my friends are leaving me. I'm getting too great a fondness for drink. I must call a halt, and go back to the better life I led a few months back. If you love me as you say you do, you should be willing to make a sacrifice to help me on to the better track. You must go back at once, get ready and marry the man you are pledged to. You are fond of luxury, the glitter and glamour of life. You will have abundant means to enable you to gratify your tastes, and you will get pleasure, if not happiness, out of it all."

She began to protest, but he assured her it was useless; that he had fully determined to do his duty to his wife, to himself and to her too, and they must separate.

He promised to befriend her at any time in any honorable way, if she should need his services. He carried her back to the hotel and she left for home the next day.

Two months later, the City papers gave a detailed account of her wedding, and the old millionaire took her abroad to spend the honeymoon.

Dick turned over the new clean leaf in earnest, and became once more, his old steady contented self. He took new interest in his business, and his home life became again ideal.

John was greatly gratified at the change in his friend. He believed that a crisis had passed in his life, that he had sown his last "wild oats", and had settled down into a model business man and a husband above reproach.

So things ran along smoothly and evenly for six months, when one day, John came across an item of news in the paper, that was very disquieting to him. Bessie and her husband, who were still abroad, had been in a railroad accident, and the old man was fatally injured.

John feared that the pretty widow would come again upon the scene, and that everything good for Dick would come to an end.



He told Dick of his fears, and warned him to be on his guard, when Bessie returned, and not allow her to ensnare him again.

“Don’t worry one minute about me, John. I have learned an unforgettable lesson, and I am too happy in my home life to be led off any more. Janice is indeed a ‘perfect woman, nobly planned.’ She gets lovelier and dearer to me day by day. I am confident that the wiles of no living woman can ever make me forget my allegiance to her again.

Bessie came back home, bringing the remains of her husband. She placed them in the handsome vault with the ashes of his first wife, cemented the door, and with a feeling of great relief that she had gotten rid of him and secured his fortune so soon, she took up life once more among old friends and scenes.

\* \* \* \* \*

The cradle, that had stood empty in Dick Wynne’s home for two years, was taken from the corner. The ruffles on the little pillow were freshly fluted, and soft fleecy blankets covered the downy bed.

Nestling there was a tiny baby with pretty brown eyes like her mother’s, and she had been given her mother’s name.

The mother had been desperately ill. Dick had been beside himself with anxiety and apprehension, but this morning the physician had assured him that the crisis had passed, and her recovery was almost a certainty.

The wee baby had been taken to her, and she had rejoiced over it, and caressed it as only a mother can, while Dick had looked on with a great love for her, and thankfulness for her promised recovery.

He had an important case to get up. His wife’s illness had delayed his work, and now that his mind was so relieved about her, he went to his office immediately after breakfast, got out his papers, and was just beginning to



arrange them before him, when someone tapped on the door, and in answer to his impatient "Come in!" the door opened and Bessie entered.

More radiantly beautiful than ever before, Dick pronounced her the moment his eyes fell upon her. Her complexion was a combination of a spotless lily and a wild pink rose, and her eyes, like violets, were deeply, darkly, beautifully blue.

She had always gowned herself tastefully, and now she was gotten up in the most exquisite manner. From the dainty widow's cap to the tips of her Parisian boots, she was faultless.

She gave him her hand, and at the same time, a smile that brought pretty dimples to her cheeks. She sank gracefully into the chair that he placed for her and told him how well he was looking and asked after his wife and new baby.

"You remember, Dick, that when we last parted, you promised to befriend me, if I ever needed you to do so. The time has come, and I am here to claim a fulfillment of that promise. My husband left me a very large inheritance. You know that I have always been as poor as a church mouse, and have had no experience in handling large sums of money. I want you to take charge of my business, and see just what shape it is in; get everything properly arranged, and explain it all to me. I can then perhaps, look after myself. If I go to a stranger, he will take advantage of my ignorance, you know. I can trust you. Will you do this for me, Dick?" and she looked at him in a very helpless and pleading way.

His first impulse was to decline, on the plea of being already over-taxed with business, and refer her to a friend of his, who lived in her city,—a good lawyer and a man whose honesty and integrity he could vouch for. He knew that this would be the wisest and safest thing to do, but he told himself that to do this, would be cowardly. It would look as if he was afraid to trust himself. He



would like to prove to John and his wife that he was indeed a changed man, and to prove to them his ability and determination to do right, and he had sense enough to know that a wrong step taken now, would surly mean his downfall.

He told her he would look after her affairs just long enough to fix them so that she could take care of them herself; but that it must only be business between them. The past he had buried, and it must remain buried for all time.

She agreed that this would be the best for both of them, and assured him that she had not the slightest desire to resurrect it.

As she left him, she gave him an exquisite white carnation, and asked him to take it to his wife from her. He promised to be with her in a few days, and see what was necessary to be done.

He tried to put her entirely out of his thoughts, when she was gone. He took a hasty lunch at noon and worked hard till night.

When he got home, he knocked at the door of his wife's room and asked the nurse if he could see her for a few moments. The nurse was preparing a quieting potion for the patient, who, she told him, was not quite so well as when he had left her in the morning. A fever had come on again, and she had a headache.

He administered the powder himself; then sat down by the bed and took her hand. He turned her wedding-ring, noticing how loosely it fitted her finger. She put up her other hand, and took hold of the lapel of his coat, and admired the carnation he had pinned to it, that Bessie had told him to give her. She asked him where he had gotten it, but he pretended not to hear her.

"Do you think I shall ever be well again, Dick? But if I should die, could you live without me?" she asked him.

"Now you must not get despondent. Everything de-



pend on your keeping up your spirits. Of course, I think you will soon be all right again. As to living without you, I would never try. I would simply die too," and he leaned over and kissed her hot lips.

The powder began to take effect,—her eyes closed, and she fell asleep.

He thought how pretty and long her lashes were, and how their darkness brought out the pallor of her face. He laid her hand on the counter-pane and tip-toed from the room.

He went into the sitting-room and lay upon the couch. The room was dark and cheerless and the silence about the house was oppressive. He felt depressed and anxious about his wife, and he thought how empty and lonely and aimless his life would be without her.

He felt mean too, to think that he had so far forgotten his duty to her as to get tangled up in that affair with Bessie.

This brought Bessie before him again in all her glorious beauty, and he fell to planning a way for getting off to the City as soon as his wife's condition would allow.



## CHAPTER XV.

THE next week Janice's convalescence was assured and Dick told her that important business called him away.

He found Bessie in an elegant home, filled with all that was beautiful and luxurious that wealth could procure. The pretty parlor where she received him, with its delicate draperies and other adornment enhanced her beauty and her evident joy at his coming was quite flattering to his vanity.

She had him to lunch with her, and her table was a marvel in costly china and silver, and the wine she served, drunk from long-stemmed crystal glasses, was the best.

He remained a couple of days, looking over lists of properties and investments. The departed husband had evidently been a shrewd and careful man. His affairs were in excellent shape. Dick showed his widow how everything was invested, who his agents were that looked after his renting interests, and advised her to let everything remain just as he had left it.

When he left her, he told her to let him know if anything went wrong, and that he would see her again.

The wine she served him at luncheon, created in him a mad desire for something stronger, and he bought a bottle of brandy before leaving the City, and resorted to it so often on his journey home that his step was unsteady when he arrived there.

The scent of liquor on his breath, when he kissed his wife, sent a pang to her heart, for she felt that he had taken a step that tended downward again. This



step downward was followed by others. Night after night, he came home scarcely knowing when or how he came; often in such a condition that she could only get him as far as the sitting-room lounge, where he would sleep through the night without disrobing. There she made him as comfortable as possible and sat by him as he lay in the unconsciousness of intoxication, her faithful woman's heart wrung with grief as she noted the deepening and increasing lines in his forehead and other changes in his face, made by dissipation.

One night he failed to come home. She put aside his supper, got her baby to sleep; then stood at the window watching anxiously for his coming. There was quite a storm raging without. The rain was falling and the wind blowing furiously. She was dreadfully worried about him.

After a time she saw a man enter the yard and with a feeling of great relief, she hastened down-stairs and opened the door to admit,—not her husband, but John Neal. A terrible fear seized her. Something had happened to Dick, she felt sure and John had come to tell her of it. She didn't ask him a question, but turned into the sitting-room, he following her.

"Dick will not be home to-night and I knew you would be anxious; so I came to explain it to you," he said.

"Why will he not come?" she asked.

He told her that he had fallen asleep at the office and that the storm was so violent, he thought it best to let him remain there.

"It is so considerate of you to let me know where he is, John, but see how wet you are."

"That doesn't matter. You know the old saying, 'neither sugar nor salt.' The wind is so high I found it impossible to keep an umbrella above my head. I hope you are not afraid to remain alone. I am sure no one will molest you. Just secure the doors and go to sleep. I will look after Dick," he promised.



"I am not in the least afraid to stay alone, but will not sleep. My baby is really ill. I am quite anxious about her."

As John turned to leave her, she said so sadly: "Oh, John! what can we do for Dick? I can't give him up and see him go to utter ruin. Can we not do something to save him?"

John realized all the hopelessness of the case, but he told her not to despair. He promised to remonstrate with him, and do all he could to induce him to do better.

He felt awfully hard toward Dick, when he went back to him and found him sleeping soundly, all unconscious of the suffering he was causing his wife. He thought that perhaps, he might have the right to go to the dogs, if it affected the life of no one but himself, but he had no right to bring such mortification and sorrow upon a helpless wife, who had been so true to him. He threw a cushion on the table and laid his head upon it, not to sleep, but to think and plan for Dick's salvation.

"When Dick awoke in the early morning, he was surprised to find himself in the office and John there with him. When he realized what it meant, he was overwhelmed with shame and declared that John should have gone about his business and not have spent the night caring for such a worthless cur as he. He asked what he supposed his wife thought had become of him.

John told him he didn't think it made any difference to him what she thought,—that a man, who acted as he was acting, had no regard for a wife, that he feared she had not spent a very restful night, alone at home with a sick baby to care for, and a husband out in town, too drunk to take care of himself.

At this, he declared that he was not fit to live and he intended to blow his brains out and be done with it all.

"That is a senseless way to talk, Dick. Why do you not make up your mind that you will get sober and stay so? Try to be a man that your wife and friends



will be proud of. You have it in you to get to the very top in your profession. You can, if you only will it, become one of the first men in the country. You can go where you please and do what you please, if only you will let drink alone, and do right. Why, in God's name, Dick, can't you see this? Why will you persist in living this reckless, sinful life that you are living. Your wife worships you. Even though you have sunk to the black pits of sin and shame, she has remained with you, steadfast, unshrinking and true. She will so gladly help you in every possible way to get upon a better track, and your friends will flock to you, and stand by you, if you will only show them that you intend to become a sober true man again. Can't you make up your mind to *try once more?* "

Dick got his hat, and left the office. He went a back way, got over his garden fence and stole into his home.

He found his wife with her sick baby in her arms. Her eyes were hollow and full of sorrow. The bed was undisturbed, showing that she had not lain down during the night. He went to her and told her just how mean and contemptible and shameless he had been, and asked her if there was any atonement he could make, anything that he could do, that would make her willing to forgive and trust him again.

"I know that I have forfeited every claim to your respect, leaving affection out of the question, but, believe me, Janice, I've loved you all the time, incredible as it may appear. I don't know what has possessed me. In all my wild, reckless career, I have not been happy. There is something woefully wrong in my make-up. Let me come back to you once more. Try to think as kindly of me as you can, and I solemnly promise that I will never let another drop of liquor pass my lips, nor turn from the straight path of honor again. My life shall be so clean, and my effort to make you happy so great, that perhaps in time, you can in a measure forget how badly I have acted."



She assured him that, in spite of all his wrong-doing and neglect of her and his child, her love had never wavered nor grown less, and that there was nothing she would not be glad to do to help him become himself again.

With her own hands she prepared his breakfast, and waited upon him as if he were an honored guest.

He didn't leave home during the day, but spent it in doing little needful jobs about the place, tying up vines, that had left their supports and nailing on loose palings.

At night he told his wife he would go for his mail,—he was expecting an important letter,—but would return in a few minutes.

He went down street. The saloon he was accustomed to visiting was bright and inviting, the sound of music and mirth came to him as he stopped at the door and looked in. He felt weak and shaky, and thought it would only be a mercy to himself to go in and take a very small drink, just enough to “brace” him up, and it should positively be his very last, and his wife need never know of it.

So he yielded to the tempter, went up to the bar, and asked for the *one* drink. This made him feel so good that he decided he would try just one more. The result was that he left the saloon in quite a jovial spirit, with a filled flask in his pocket.

He got his letter from the post-office, which was entirely too dainty looking for a business document. He began to feel light-headed and hot, and decided to go down to the creek below town and take a plunge. He reached the creek and soon emptied his flask, lay down under a clump of willows, and fell asleep and knew nothing more till morning.

Then everything came back to him.

“Last night's doings certainly wind up everything for me here. I can't face Janice after so soon breaking



the solemn pledge that I made her only yesterday. I shall just go away,—far away. If I ever become a decent man again, I will come back. If I do not,—if I am to sink to the lowest depths, and it seems that on that I am determined, I want it to be among strangers.”

He looked in his purse. It contained a five dollar bill. He could not start on the journey he intended to take, with so small a sum; so he went to his office, and from the safe took a roll of money, and wrote a note to John, telling him of his intention to go away.

“After the acknowledgment of my bad conduct to my wife yesterday, and the solemn promise to reform that I made her, and which I have already broken, I can’t go back to her now. I am going among strangers, and make a desperate effort to regain respectability and if I succeed, I will come back to Janice. Look after her, John. She, of course, will be dreadfully upset at my leaving her, but I believe it is the best thing for me to do,”—so he wrote.

He got a conveyance and driver to take him to the nearest railroad station. He reached it just in time to get aboard as the train pulled out.



## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN he failed to return home "in a few minutes," as he had promised his wife he would do, the evening previous, she knew that he had yielded to temptation again.

Her baby had grown worse and needed all of her attention. She tried to worry about Dick as little as possible, believing that John would look after him as he had the night before.

John found the note from him on his desk as soon as he got to the office. He read it. He was greatly disturbed over it. He knew that Dick's leaving in that condition would distress his wife terribly; that the uncertainty of what would become of him would be dreadful to her, but there was nothing to do but to carry her the note.

When she had read it, and realized that he had left her, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Oh, John, has he really deserted me and my little child? Do you think he will ever come back to us?" she asked.

John told her it was in all probability the best thing he could have done, that he would soon tire of roaming and find out that home was the best place for him and be glad to come back.

"You have nothing, with which to reproach yourself. You have done your whole duty to him as a wife. Put everything in the hands of the Good Father and trust Him to bring it all out right," he advised her.

\* \* \* \* \*



"You may not know everything that's worth finding out on this mundane spear, Calline Johnson, but thar's one thing that you do know all about, and that one thing is, the makin' o' soft soap. From the settin' up of the ash hopper, to the pourin' o' the soap into the jair, thar's nothin' left fer you to learn. You can't be fooled about the right time of the moon for bilin' it nuther."

So Aunt Calline soliloquized one morning, as she stood by a pot of soap, that she had just pronounced "done."

She dipped it up, and let it fall in rich amber ropes from her "stirrin' stick," a look of perfect satisfaction on her countenance.

"Six gallins for myself," she continued, "and one gallin that I'm a-goin' to put in this nice smooth jair, and take to Janice Wynne for scourin' purposes."

"Poor little creetur! She's a-havin' a hard time of it, I hear, a-tryin' to save the carcass and soul both of that man she had the misfortin' to tie to. Thar's no excuse under God's Heaven for him to be a-goin' on like he is. It's nothin' but pure downright devilment in him; and as long as my soap's done, I would shorely like to give him a leetle techin' up with this here 'stirrin' paddle.'"

She deposited her soap in the cellar, washed and greased her pot, and turned it bottom up, and in a half hour she went down the street with the soap she was giving Janice.

John had just left Janice, and she was needing the old lady's sympathy more than her soap, when she went in. She was in tears, every vestige of hope gone out of her face.

"Oh! Aunt Calline, what shall I do?" she moaned. "Dick has gone. He has deserted me and my baby. Do you think I'm to blame for it?"

"Shet up sech foolish talk, Honey. Hain't you done everything any mortal woman could do fer Dick Wynne? I was a-settin' on the very front seat in that Church up yonder on top o' that hill that purty mornin' not so



many year ago, when you and Dick got married. You was the sweetest lookin' creetur that I ever sot eyes upon, as you come up that aisle a-leanin' on his arm in your little gray dress a-totin' of that big bunch of lilac blossoms. You promised to stick to him through good report and evil too. For better, for worse, till death parts; I heered you say, and you've done all you promised. You ain't one spec to blame. You didn't drive him off. You didn't as much hint that you wanted him to go. Thar was nobody that tied a rope to his leg and drug him off. He jes' went because he wanted to. He had acted so little and mean and low-down that he couldn't stay.

"You won't like to hear me tell you, and mebbe you won't take it after I do tell you, but the advice I'm a-goin' to give you is this,—jes' let him go. Don't bother to send him a special invertation to come back. Let him take his own good time about comin'. Ef he was sober, and know'd what he was a-doin' when he left you, he ain't wuth greevin' about; and you air better off without him. Ef he didn't have his right min' when he went, when he gits it back, you kin look fer him, for he will shorely come. Git down on your knees and ax the Good Lord for help. Tell Him you air plum' willin' to do whatever he wants yer to do; to go whar He wants yer to go. Put everything in His hands, for they air a heap bigger and stronger than yourn, and go right on about your business like nothin' had happened. Shet up the house, and come and stay with me a few days, tell yer git kin'er ust ter things."



## CHAPTER XVII.

It was near the close of an extremely hot August day. The sun was going down behind the western hills. Two men were walking the dusty, cinder-covered track of a railroad, that wound its way over the hills and through the plains.

They were remarkably alike,—the same height and build; black hair and eyes and well-shaped hands and feet, that betokened good blood and breeding, though they had been taken for tramps by people, who had met them that day as they passed along.

The two had met for the first time the night before in a saloon in a small town ten miles behind them. Each of them had there spent his last cent for a drink, and they had gone out into the night together, and had shared a straw bed in a barn loft. They had been given a piece of bread and a glass of milk by a kind-hearted farmer's wife at noon, and now they were feeling the need of something more. One of them was without a coat, and his hat was almost brimless.

In a valley below the track they were wearily walking. They saw a two room log cabin. The yard was neatly swept and the walk leading from the gate to the low doorstep had a bordering of bright old-fashioned flowers. Over the door was carefully trained a balsam vine, and the rich, golden fruit shone among the finely cut green leaves. On a shelf in the shadow of the vine, was a well scoured bucket and a white long-handled gourd.

Altogether, it was a restful and inviting looking place to the two tired men and they scrambled down the embankment and stood at the gate. The light shone cheerily



from the door-way and a woman was rocking a little child to sleep in its cradle. The men entered and asked to be allowed to stop for the night.

The woman, who possessed a refinement and beauty not often met with in such an out-of-the-way place, told them that it was a rule of her husband, never to turn weary and hungry men from his door,—gave them water and towels and left them to refresh themselves, while she prepared the evening meal.

They heard the master of the home come in, whistling from the barn and heard his wife in a low tone, tell him of their presence. She laid the table, and the odor of frying meat and coffee, that came to their nostrils, was surely delightful to the hungry guests.

When called to supper, they were not questioned as to where they came from, or where they were going, but were bountifully helped to the food before them. It was a wholesome meal. The wayfarers did full justice to it.

At its conclusion, one of the men excused himself, retired to the room assigned them, fell across the bed, and was soon sleeping soundly. The other, following a path that led down a short hill, reached a spring, where a bench with a paddle for pounding dirt from soiled clothing lying upon it, and a large iron pot, indicated that the family laundry was done here. The man seated himself upon the bench.

The moon had come up and was shining brightly. An orchestra of frogs was concerting in a reedy marsh and a night bird called plaintively from a nearby tree-top.

The man listened to the voices of the night for a time; then he said aloud to himself: "How tired I am! Tired both in body and soul. I am utterly wretched. This peaceful home here in the solitude, with the apparent love and content of its inmates, has made me terribly homesick. These are such lonely looking hills. I want the hills of home. I am hungry for the sight of my wife's face, for the tender touch of her hand, for the



sound of her voice, speaking in sweet forgiveness. I wonder if I may ever hear it again." The man was Dick Wynne.

He was still a wanderer from home and those who loved him. He went back to the cabin where his companion was still sleeping, hung his coat and hat on a chair, and he too was soon wrapped in the forgetfulness of sleep.

He attempted to rise when he awoke in the morning, but found himself too ill to do so. An acute pain in his head with nausea, compelled him to lie back upon his pillow.

It developed that his companion had departed sometime during the night, taking Dick's coat, watch and hat, and leaving his own brimless hat behind him.

Before the day was gone, Dick was raving in delirium. The country doctor was called in, and after an examination, he pronounced his patient an extremely sick man. For a week he lay unconscious, and for two more, he was too weak to leave his bed. He was told that the man, who came to the cabin with him had gone to sleep on the railroad track fifty miles away, and an engine ran over him, killing him as he lay in his drunken sleep.

One evening, when Dick had so far recovered that he knew he could no longer accept the hospitality of these kind people, when he had nothing with which to repay them, he saw his host take the bucket and go down to the spring.

He followed him and they sat upon the bench where he had sat the first night of his stay at the cabin, and he told the whole story of his life, not keeping back any of his wrong-doing. He told of his wife and child, and said that he had left them, hoping that among strangers he could reform.

"You made a mistake right there," said his friend. "You stood a better chance to reform at home with those, who love you, to help you and my advice to you is to



return at once. From what you tell me of your wife, I know that she will give you a royal welcome and the help that a man can get from no one but a good wife or mother. I will let you have money, if you haven't it, and you can refund it. I will go into town to-morrow and get the clothing you need. You haven't a hat or coat. You have been without drink long enough to let it alone, if you will. You must get back and take up your home and business life without delay."

Two days later he was on the train homeward bound.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN half-way home, he made the acquaintance of a person, always to be met with on a journey of any length,—a jovial, good fellow, with a red nose and a flask in his grip. He invited Dick to have a drink with him, and alas! for his good resolutions! He took one,—and he took several more.

He left the train at a town twenty miles from home to get his flask filled and the train pulled off without him. He went to the hotel to wait for the next one and when it came, he was too drunk to know of its coming. Here he stayed till his last cent was gone and he started on foot for home.

He got there at noon on the second day and not wishing to be seen by anyone, he went the back way to the Church, thinking he would go in and rest till night, before going to his wife. The Church door was unlocked and he went in and sat by a window.

What a flood of recollections rushed over him! By this same window he had always sat, when as a boy he had come to Church to see his sweetheart. She sat directly across the Church, a shy, brown-eyed girl, beside her mother. He never heard a word of the text or the sermon, but gave all of his attention to her. Later on, when he had reached young manhood, he occupied this same seat. He could see her come in; before she sat down, she always shot a swift glance to learn if he was in his place and a guilty flush overspread her face, when she saw that he detected it. He could see her now in her dainty dresses and pretty Spring hats, with the light of love and happiness in her face.



He went and stood in front of the altar on the identical spot, where he stood when he made her his wife. In fancy, he could hear "Oh, promise me," as it was played softly on the little organ in the corner, and feel the trembling of her hand on his arm, as she said in tones so sweet and low "till death us do part." He remembered that he too had promised to be faithful unto death, and he realized that this was now one among many other broken promises.

He left the Church and climbed the fence that enclosed the churchyard. He kept in the shadow of the trees and shrubbery. Seeing no one, he ventured out into the walk and stopped at the plot where his baby was buried.

He suddenly turned white, and dropped down by a long, newly made grave beside the small one.

\* \* \* \* \*

Aunt Calline with a basket of gorgeous red and yellow dahlias came along the walk and turned into the lot.

She stopped instantly, dropped her basket, threw up both hands and said: "Heavens above! Dick Wynne, when did you rise?"

"For the Lord's sake, Aunt Calline, tell me whose grave this is," he pleaded, unmindful of her question.

"Why, it's yourn," she said. "Would you like to know how you come to your end?"

"I don't think that matters. It can have been no worse than I deserve," he told her.

"You air mighty right. Yer know yer deserted your wife and baby, and went to roam the wide world over. You got out o' money, as ordinary folks allus do, when they start off on sech a lengthy trip, and instid o' ridin' all the way, you had to take to trampin'. You sot down on a railroad track somewhars out west, thinkin' the engine would go around a gentleman of your importance, I reckon, but it didn't. It tuck you up and sot



you over a fence in a briar patch and bunged you up so terribly that nobody would a-knowed who yer was if it hadn't a-bin fer some letters and cards yer had in yer pocket, that told whar yer come from. Somebody let John Neal know about it and he went and brought your remainders home. They give you a real nice funeral; shot up all the stores and hired the whole livery stable to take the folks to the cemetery. That's all I know about your death and that grave. Can you tell me any more?"

"I think I understand it all now. On the last day of my tramping out West, I was accompanied by a man, that I met the night before in a saloon in a little town. We went together to a cabin in the hills to spend the night. We were wonderfully alike, and pulled down the scales to about the same notch. I may have been slightly the taller.

"That night while I slept, he took my hat and coat and skipped out. A few days later he was run over by a train and killed as he lay asleep, drunk on the track. A description of him suited me exactly and my cards and letters found in the pocket of the coat he took from me, fixed the identity on me. Here he sleeps among strangers and here I am back home, ashamed to face my wife in this garb and condition. She thinks me dead and buried and it is a great pity that I am not. If I put in an appearance at home to-night, it will certainly startle her."

"Don't yer go to her to-night. You do look tough. Spend the night at my house and get a good night's rest. Git up early in the mornin' and spruce up and go home, and see what she'll have to say to yer. I'll go home and fix yer some supper. You can go the back way so nobody'll see yer."

She took a pan of grain into the yard and called her chickens. They each had a name. It was difficult for her to decide which one she would sacrifice for the re-



turned prodigal's supper, but she finally settled on "Hobson." She brought her best china, white, decorated with blue birds, and her nicest linen and laid the table.

When Dick got in about dusk and went into supper hungry after his long tramp, a welcome sight greeted him. The bright coffee pot was puffing the aroma of well made coffee, from its spout and "Hobson," fried to a turn, was resting on a platter, surrounded by creamy brown puffs. A bowl of rich gravy, biscuits of good size and lightness, a print of Brindle's best butter and peach preserves comprised the bill of fare. Dick ate ravenously, after which he lit a cigar and leaving the house, he went out for a stroll to see how the town looked.



## CHAPTER XIX.

OPPOSITE his own home he stopped in the shadow of a large oak and leaned against its trunk. His door was open and the light from a well-trimmed lamp shone out upon the porch and for some distance down the walk.

He saw his wife come out in her black dress, leading her child by the hand. How sweetly familiar her voice sounded as she talked to it, and it prattled softly to her.

A man came down street, opened the gate and went up the walk. When he entered the light, he saw that the man was John. The child held both hands to him, and he took her in his arms, and carried her to the sitting-room and stood her on the table. He took a package from his pocket and gave it to her and she opened it. He saw that it was a doll. After frolicking with her a while, she laid her head on his shoulder and went to sleep.

"One would think she was John's kid instead of mine," the man in the shadow of the oak said bitterly.

After Janice took the child from John and carried her off to bed, he took a book from his pocket and sat by the table looking through it. She came back and sat near him and looked on as he turned the leaves.

When he left, she closed and locked the door and as he went up street, Dick, keeping in the shadow, followed him. He saw him go in his office and light it and take the book he had looked through with Janice and lay it on the desk. He then closed the windows and went away.



When he was out of sight, Dick crossed the street, fitted a key to the door, opened it and went in. He made a light and picked up the book John had left on the desk and opened it.

"Hello! Here's a book of prints,—T O M B-STONES!!"

"Well, let me see what they have selected for me. I guess that's what they were doing with their heads so near together down at the house. Here's one marked. I suppose it is the one. They are going to do the handsome thing by me, I see. It's the finest in the whole lot. Here they will cut my name and the usual words "In loving memory" etc. I wonder if she loves me still. I don't see how it can be possible. What a pity that she didn't fancy John instead of me!! They would have suited so well. She was always too good for me."

"Well, well, I'll get back to Aunt Calline's. I know she's tired of waiting up for me. I'll get a good sleep and to-morrow morning I will go home and put a stop to this tombstone business.

The rest, a good bath, his hair and clothes brushed, improved him greatly. He put on a bold front, held up his head and went the principal street directly home.

His wife was in the dining-room with a waiter of roses, that she had cut with the dew still upon them, in her hand. She was going to the cemetery. She turned and faced him as he entered the door.

With a glad cry she ran to him and took his hands. "Oh, Dick!" she cried, "it was all a mistake. You are not dead, and you have come back to me."

"Yes, back to you Janice and I have come to stay, if you will allow me."

So he took up his home and business life once more. He went to work with a will and as the days came and went, he seemed happy and contented with his wife and child, and life took on a different aspect for them.

Janice put behind her the shadow, the sorrow and the



tears. New hopes came into her heart and she tried to look forward to years of gladness and peace.

The brightness was not to be of long duration, however. Just as she began to feel secure in it all, Dick's health failed. She with the eyes of love, was the first to notice it. His appetite failed; he was always tired, then he took a cough and had fever.

The doctor was called and said that he was "just run down," and needed a tonic. He would give him one that would soon build him up and bring him round all right. It looked for a time that this would be the case, but his improvement was only temporary and next a change was proposed for him.

John persuaded Janice to leave the little girl with his sister, and she go with Dick and give him all her attention. This was agreed upon and she took him up in the mountains, when he grew a little stronger, then lost it all, grew despondent and wanted to return home and went.

He was wearied out with the travel, took his bed and never again left it. Janice nursed him constantly, would scarcely leave him a moment and John was as faithful, but love could not keep him and when Spring came, when Nature wore her loveliest robes, the end came.

"Hold fast to my hand, Janice as I drift out upon the dark waters of this mysterious river! Your love and John's friendship have been the truest things that ever came into my life. I leave her to you John. You will be faithful to the trust," he said.



## CHAPTER XX.

THEN Janice told John that she must go away: "There is nothing left me here but memories and most of them are bitter. I will close my house and take my little girl and go to a place I have never seen before and among people I have never known, I'll make me a new home and it may be that in time I may to some extent forget."

So she left it all behind her and went to a distant city. She took a cottage and made her a garden and grew the flowers she loved best. In her rooms she hung pretty draperies and pictures and put in tasteful furnishings. She met new people and made friends of many of them; read new books; became a member of a small Church and tried to become interested in its work. She was constantly employed in her effort to get away from her trouble.

The Summer waned. The melancholy days of Autumn came; her flowers died, she lost interest, became restless and dissatisfied and found herself longing for the home and faces of friends she had left.

"I can never make me a home here," she thought, as she stirred the fire into a brighter glow and turned on all the light in the room, at the close of an especially dark and rainy day.

"I question if I acted wisely in coming away from my home. I am even more wretched here, where all is strange to me, than I was where everything held a sorrowful memory, I think I must just go back to my old friends,—Aunt Calline and John especially.—How true they were to me, and how I have missed them. I



will go back, and live among them again, and try to face the future bravely and cheerfully."

With her, to decide was to act quickly and in a short time she had everything arranged and started back home. She couldn't bear the thought of going into her empty home alone at night, and she stopped and knocked at Aunt Calline's door, when she arrived in the village.

It was Saturday night and ten o'clock. The old lady was preparing for bed, had just tied on a ruffled night-cap, when she was startled by the knocking on her door.

She knew Janice's voice immediately, and flung the door wide open and had her in her arms before she had time to think.

She prepared a cup of coffee for Janice and got bread and milk for the child; after which she tucked them away in her best bed and left them to "tired Nature's sweet restorer."

\* \* \* \* \*

"This is Communion Day at our Church. Brother Flynt will have somethin' good and comfortin' to say, and I don't know a body a-livin' that needs to hear him say it, more than you Honey," said Aunt Calline, the next morning, as she washed up the breakfast things.

"You must go to meetin'," she went on, "your friends will be so glad to see yer back. I'll take the child and go and open up your house. I was thar yistiddy and swept and dusted things. We kin have dinner thar as well as here and the sooner you git back home, the better it will be fer you."

So Janice went to the little Church on the Hill. Before entering it, she visited Dick's grave. She found it covered with the gayest of Fall flowers,—red and yellow zinneas and royal purple asters. It looked like a



bright piece of patchwork, and she knew that the hands of Aunt Calline had spread it there.

She went quietly into the Church and took her old seat. She saw many familiar faces, but John's was not one of them. She wondered at this, for she knew that he always went to Church. She had heard him say that if one was a member, it was his duty to go; and if he was not a member, his going was a mark of respectability. Just as the singing began, he came in.

She noticed at once that he was thinner than she had ever seen him and looked weary and care-worn. Since she had gone away, it had pained him to see her place either occupied by another or vacant, and he had for some time not allowed himself to look there. Consequently he knew nothing of her presence, this morning.

At the conclusion of the sermon, which, as Aunt Calline had predicted, was full of comfort, the usual invitation was given to "all, who were in love and fellowship with their neighbor," to come forward to the Lord's table. John and Janice left their seats at the same moment and met at the altar.

When he saw her, he gave a start and turned slightly paler, then recovered himself and they knelt side by side. After the broken bread, the cup was passed from her lips to his and they were bidden to "arise and go in peace." It was indeed with a great peace in his heart that he went, for she had come back to him.

He waited at the door till she came out surrounded by friends. He took her hand and said, as he clasped it warmly: "And you have come back to us."

"Yes, I think I have come now to stay," she answered.

"Thank God!" came so fervently from his lips that she looked into his face wonderingly.

They went together through the sanded village street, through her gate and along the dear familiar garden walk and into the house, where they found Aunt Calline seated in a rocker, singing



“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
“That saved a wretch like me.”

She had little Janice in her lap. The child hugged a gray kitten in her arms and looked with eyes wide open, at the old lady, as she listened to the doleful song.

John only stayed long enough to greet the child and to get one of her old time kisses, then he went away.

He was happy that Janice had come back of her own free will and could not refrain from wondering if it could possibly mean anything good for him.



## CHAPTER XXI.

AUNT CALLINE went to town one morning to get some copperas to put in her chicken trough. Jeff Davis had been droopy for a day or two and Carrie Nation hadn't been altogether as aggressive as usual and she feared they were on the verge of an epidemic of some sort.

She got opposite the home of Mr. Brooks, a merchant of the town, just as the front door flew open and a girl came out screaming.

"Oh, Aunt Calline," she called, when she recognized this friend to all little children, "run quick, Tommy has swallowed his nickel, and is choking to death."

The old lady had Tommy standing on his head, and she was giving him a good beating in the back, in a moment. He coughed and the nickel flew out of his mouth and rolled under the bed.

The room was in disorder. The beds were still unmade and Mrs. Brooks' faded and ragged wrapper was lying on the floor, where she had left it, when she stepped out of it to array herself in all her glory for a whole day out.

She had left the house and children in care of a servant, but there was too much work staring the servant in the face, and she concluded to leave and go to Mrs. Williamson's, where she had been promised more money, less work and three afternoons off, instead of one. In the kitchen the breakfast dishes were piled, unwashed in the dish pan. An old yellow cat with both eyes shut, was upon the table, licking the icing, that had not already run off of itself from a cake that was intended as a donation to the festival, that was to be



held at the parsonage in the evening. The cow had her head in the back door and was helping herself to the turnip salad, that was bought for the noon-day meal.

"Whar is your Ma, daughter," Aunt Calline inquired, after she had driven the cow off and shut the door and removed the cake to a place of safety.

"She's gone to her bridge and she won't be home till late, for she's going to the Church to a meeting, when she leaves the Club."

"Yes, the 'Village Improvement' meets at four o'clock. I think the ladies air a-goin' to try to 'solve the servant problem,' as they say."

She washed Tommy's face and got his hat and the little girl's bonnet and told them to go and stay at the store with their Pa till their Ma got through "bridgin' it and solvin' the servant problem."

She stopped at the fence to talk a bit with John Neal, when she got to his house. He was in the yard looking after some improvements he was making on his house. He told her he was adding two new rooms and extending the veranda around to the back,—was going to paint up and hang new paper and be as fine as two fiddles before long.

"Seems like to me you've got room enough now fer two folks and I can't fer the life o' me, see why you want to be makin' more work for Edith. She can't git a nigger to clean up the rooms she's already got."

A mischievous twinkle came into his eye, as he said: "Yes, there's plenty o' room for us two, but did you never hear of folks getting married?"

She knew at once, or thought she did, that he was the one to be married. She felt that he owed it to her to give her his confidence, as she had for so long been one of his very best friends. He didn't say anything more, and she was too proud to insist on his telling her all about it, but she couldn't go until she learned a little more. So she asked if she was acquainted with both of the parties.



"No, you've never met one of them," he told her and just then, he was called off by one of the workmen, and she went on to town to make her purchase.

She was so deep in thought over what she had heard, that she ran into a rose vine that was climbing over Janice Wynne's fence and almost put out one of her eyes. It then occurred to her to go in and tell the news.

Janice answered her ring at the door and she began at once: "This town seemes like it's on a buildin' as well as on a matrimony boom. Old Ben, the shoemaker is addin' a lean-to to his shebang. Dr. Jonas is a-buildin' of a new chicken house and John Neal is addin' two rooms to his house and a-runnin' the mirande plum' round to the back. I stopped and chatted a while with him as I come by. I axed the 'casion of the improvement; told him I couldn't see how two folks could have any need of any more room than he already had. He laughed mighty 'spicious-like and said: 'Did you never hear of folks gittin' married?' You know thar allus has to be a lot o' fixin' and freshenin' on important 'casions like weddings. I was sho'ly s'prised, but I don't see why I ought to of been, for the last time I saw Liza Smith, she told me he was off on a courtin' trip. You remember the time he went off and stayed so long,—a whole week, wasn't it,—not long ago?"

Yes, she remembered it well, and how she had missed him and wished for his return, but she didn't tell this to her visitor.

"You know Liza allus knows all about everybody's business. She has a cousin livin' in the very town John went to, and this cousin wrote Liza that he was a-flyin' round a mighty nice little widder, who had a plaenty o' money and was a beauty too, and that the talk was that he was a-goin' to bring her back with him the next time he goes. Hit must be a-goin' to happen shortly, for I heered him tell the man that was a-bossin' of his work, that it must be finished inside of a month."



After Aunt Calline left, Janice went into her sewing-room and got her work-basket. She was always making pretty things for her baby and she had placed the dainty sacque she was embroidering in her basket at dusk the evening before, reluctantly, she was so interested in the making of the garment.

Now she threaded her needle with blue silk and set a few stitches; then the work dropped in her lap and she rested her cheek on her hand and looked out of the window, as she thought.

“And he’s goin’ to be married. How fortunate the woman who is to be his wife. She can but be happy with him. I pray he may be happy too. He has had a lonely life. Edith is well meaning, but careless. She has never made his home the well ordered and attractive place that he would have liked it to be. He deserves a home life, rich in happiness and blessings. She is beautiful, they say. He told me once that he could never love a homely woman. In describing his ideal, he said she was ‘a little woman with brown eyes and hair and a sweet, sensitive mouth with such tender lines about it. She was shy and dependent in her bearing and would lean on and trust him, and give her life and very soul unreservedly into his keeping.’ And how sincere and loyal and earnest will be his love for her; and he will care for her and keep her feet always along flower bordered paths.”

Then she covered her face with her two white hands and there was a great rush of tears to her brown eyes, and she said aloud: “Oh! I do not want John to marry. Our friends are never the same to us after marriage. Now he is as an older and loved brother to me. There is nothing that I would hesitate to ask him to do for me. There is no service, that he is not glad to render me. When he gets this wife, I can’t go to him with my worries and perplexities, that he always knows just how to drive away. A wife would not like me to go to him.



"But I must not be selfish. When I get a little accustomed to the thought of his belonging to this pretty little widow, I will tell him how glad I am that he is to be happy, and I will help Edith get things in order and made beautiful for the coming of the bride."

\* \* \* \* \*

Aunt Calline passed the Church on her return home, and the bell began to ring. She wondered if anyone was dead or if there was to be a wedding; then she remembered that the little Brooks girl had told her that her mother was to go to a meeting of the "Village Improvement Society," at the Church at four o'clock. "That's it," she decided, "I like to keep up with what's goin' on round me. I believe I'll drap in for a short spell and hear what the ladies have to say."

The Church was empty when she entered. She took her accustomed seat, picked up a book and began reading the hymns for entertainment while waiting for the crowd to gather. A trim little yellow dog tripped up the aisle, jumped upon the bench and sat up beside her. "Guess Sister Trowbridge will be along presently, as Jack has come. Jack never misses anything," she thought. Just then, "Sister Trowbridge" came in and sat down by Jack. Soon other members of the Society began to arrive and when the roll was called, with one or two exceptions, the whole body was there.

Sister Evans explained the object of the meeting. It was to discuss the unsatisfactory service the negroes were giving housekeepers and try to find a way of improving it. "We never know when we retire at night that the cook will be on hand next morning, to prepare breakfast. If she is and we give her a task to perform that isn't exactly to her liking, she'll flatly refuse to do it, or suggests that we perform it ourselves. My servant left me this very morning rather than rid the kitchen of dirt that she had put there. She insolently told me that she didn't scrub her own kitchen and she





“Guess Trowbridge will be along Presently as Josh has come, Jack never misses Anything,” she thought.

*(Janice)*







wouldn't scrub mine. The conditions are growing worse continually and we must find a remedy somewhere. We are all equally interested in the matter and I want suggestions from each of you. Suppose we hear something from Aunt Calline."

Aunt Calline was on her feet at once and remarked that she saw nothing at all puzzling about it. "There is a very simple and harmless remedy that will shorely set things right, ef you are willin' to use it. A majority of you will think the remedy worse than the disease, but it ain't and ef you will give it a fair trial,—keep it up long enough, you will soon get service that will tickle you. Here is the remedy: Learn to work yourselves and don't be afeared of it. It won't hurt you. When your cook tells you to do your own scrubbin', get busy and do it. Tell her to go. Don't let her think she goes because she wants to, but let her know that she goes because you won't let her stay. There's jest a few of you that know how to do anything. I heered one of you say a few days ago, that your husband wouldn't eat your cookin' and you didn't blame him, for you couldn't eat it yourself. Let the darkies go; roll up your sleeves and tie up your heads. You won't have to tuck up your skirts for the most of you have got 'em cut too short for decency now. Make yourselves independent of the trifling help you are putting up with. They are dependent on you and ef you don't employ 'em, they will soon come to their senses and give you honest service for good wages. In my humble opinion, this is the only true remedy for your trouble and I leave the subject with you, for Brindle is a-waitin' for me right now."

She walked out. Jack followed her to the door, watched her out of sight, then went back and sat by Sister Trowbridge till the meetng adjourned, without "solving the servant problem."

Aunt Calline's remedy was not palatable enough to suit them.



## CHAPTER XXII.

ON the evening of this same day, the light was bright in John Neal's library. He had been reading, or rather he had been trying to concentrate his thought upon an article in a new magazine. Edith had brought her work. She was putting a lace on one of her wedding garments. Somehow she wanted to be with her brother to-night. She had an idea that he was getting unhappy as the time drew near when she was to take the name of another, one, who would of course, come in between them and be a little nearer and dearer to her.

John put aside his book and fired his pipe, laughed and told her that he thought he had misled Aunt Cal-line in regard to the wedding.

"She thinks I'm the one who contemplates the giving up of single misery."

"Just let her think that way John, I've never thought it good taste to proclaim the coming of such an event from the housetop. You know I've tried from the first to keep it from every one, but," she added in a more serious tone, "now that I am to marry, why do you not go and do likewise? You would make some woman a mighty good husband. Is your heart so cold that no one has been able to kindle a flame within it? Or is it such a big one, and so susceptible to the charms of womankind, that you can't settle on one, but must try to take in the whole of them. I fear you will be lonely when I give myself away completely to Russell. I would never have consented to marry him, if he had not decided to come here, and go into the office with you. You must accept him as a brother, and we three will be



quite happy here together in the same old home. But as I have said, I think you would be happier if you had a wife and I wish you could find someone you could love well enough to give that place in your home."

"I wonder if I have guarded the sacred secret of my heart so well, that even you, my sister, have not suspected it. If I have, I feel to-night that I want to tell it to you. There is a wee brown-eyed woman not a mile away, that with all my heart, I love, I adore, I worship. I learned to love her when she was a girl at school. When she grew to womanhood, I loved her still. A more fortunate man won her for his wife, and God knows that I tried to forget the love I had given her, from a sense of honor, but I must confess that it lingered no in spite of me, and to-night in the loneliness of her widowhood, she is far dearer to me than ever before. If the Good Father above would so bless me as to bring her to my hearthstone, to light the fire of home for me, there is no service I would not gladly render him."

"Can it be that you love Janice, John?"

"Yes, it is Janice Wynne. She doesn't dream of it. I've felt for some time that I must go to her and tell her of all the depth and breath and fullness of this love I have for her and ask her to look into her heart and see that if in some remote corner of it, she may not find a little spark of something,—esteem, respect, even pity,—that I may tend and fan into a warmer sentiment. Oh, I can't begin to tell you what this love I have for her amounts to. It is in every thought I have by day; it fills my every dream by night. My sole hope is that my life may be so clean and honorable and upright, that she will some day come to me. She has a great friendship for me. She trusts and comes to me with all her worries. Her association with me is so free and unreserved, that I fear if I tell her of my love, it will do away with all this treasured trust. It may drive her away from me. So I let the days and weeks go by with-



out speaking, but God alone knows how I hunger for her love!"

"I have seen very little of her for the last year, in fact since she came back to her home," said his sister. "And I can't tell you what I think of your chances to win her, John, but I will find out. One woman can usually read another, if she goes about it in the right way."

The fresh paint on John Neal's house glistened in the morning sunlight. The interior decorations were finished and approved. The last workman had gone.

Edith was as busy and excited as girls always are when preparing for the most eventful day of all their lives.

She opened the front door and stepped out upon the veranda just as Janice Wynne came up the walk.

As she took her hand, she noticed that she was not looking well. She was too pale and her eyes had dark shadows under them, as if she had not been sleeping well.

"I've heard of the wedding Edith, and have come to offer congratulations and to ask you to let me help you, if there is anything I can do. You must let me do something,—your brother has done so much for me," she said, with a little catch in her voice.

"Come right in, but let me show you the rooms before you sit down. Everything is so pretty and I am so proud of it all. John has fine taste. I left it to him and he has just overdone himself."

She took her through the parlor, library and dining-room, then into her own apartment. Here the walls were of the palest green, scattered over with dainty pink buds. The rugs and cushions matched them, and the filmy lace curtains overhung pale green silk shades. The pretty bed and dresser with so many beautiful things lying upon it, were admired and then they went into John's room.



"This is the sunniest and prettiest room of all and he deserves the very choicest and best of everything; he is so unselfish, dear old John," declared his sister.

Here the walls were cream, with great bunches of lilacs upon them, that looked as if their cups held all the rich fragrance of the living blossoms. There were soft, luxurious chairs, pretty pictures and books and rare bric-a-brac and elegant rugs and curtains. Janice took in all the beauty and luxury and then she said:

"What life must be in a home like this, the wife of a man like John."

A red flush overspread her face, when she realized how she had spoken. She turned and went hastily out of the room.

Edith had read this woman and she knew that she loved John!

Janice made no further allusion to the wedding until she was leaving. Then she said: "When will your brother bring his bride?"

"Why, you silly child, John is not to be married. I am to be the bride. I thought you knew all about it."

\* \* \* \* \*

Janice went down the walk and into the street and home, her feet falling so lightly and her heart beating happily. She put off her hat, and humming a gay tune, she began rummaging her wardrobe for something pretty to wear to the wedding.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

EDITH'S wedding was a Church affair. The whole village was bidden and the whole village was there.

The bridegroom was handsome and happy and the bride lovely in a pretty going-away gown, with an armful of white roses.

John gave her away and tried to look happy too, but he was far from feeling so, for he realized that he was giving away all of his own that he had to love him.

He kissed Edith good-bye, saw the carriage driven away, that was to take the happy couple to the railroad and then he went home.

He spent the remainder of the day trying to read and at dusk he went out upon the lawn. As he walked with his hands clasped behind him, he heard a wee voice say "Open the gate, John. I want you;" he saw Janice Wynne's little girl peeping through the pickets, and he went and admitted her. She made a pretty picture of a run-a-way baby, with her curls tangled above her eyes and her eating apron on; her hands and mouth showing that strawberry jam had been upon her bill of fare. He possessed all a man's abhorrence of a contact with jam of any kind, and he told her to go in the house. He followed her, got a basin of water, washed her face and hands and brushed her curls. As he did this, she asked: "Have you seen my Mamma, John? I want her. Don't you want her too?"

"Indeed I do," he replied. "We will go and find her."

He took her out to the street and met her mother coming in search of her.





Never before had Janice been so Entertaining and Never  
had John been so Happy.

*(Janice)*







"I have found a lost child," he laughingly said. "You must prove property, if she is yours."

He tried to loosen the little fingers, that held to his own, but she would not allow him to do so and declared that he must go home with her to see her kitten and doll.

"Will you come in?" Janice asked, as he opened the gate for her. "If you will, I can give you a cup of tea and a slice of Aunt Calline's best bread and butter. She has just sent me a fresh hot loaf."

"I believe I will," and he went into the cozy sitting-room. "I haven't the courage to go home. You don't know how empty and lonely it is without Edith."

"Yes, I know only too well all the loneliness and emptiness of a broken home," she told him.

John sat in a rocking chair. The little girl climbed upon his lap, laid her curly head against his breast and went sound asleep. He put her on the lounge and covered her with an afghan and when Janice came in the room, he took the tray with the bread and butter and cakes from her and she went back for the tea. They sat down opposite each other at the table.

The room was all aglow with light and a cheery wood fire blazed and crackled and sent its red sparks flying up the wide chimney. Never before had Janice been so entertaining and never had John been so happy. He laughed at everything she said, took two cups of tea and ate all the bread and butter without knowing it. He knew nothing in fact, save that he was alone at home with the woman he had loved so long.

"Will you sing me one song before I go," he asked, as he opened the piano.

"What shall it be?" she inquired.

"Suppose you try this," and he placed a sheet of music before her. A smile played about her mouth, when she saw that it was a new piece that she had just learned;



"If you were mine,  
"This world would be a paradise of flowers;  
"The darkest day with golden light would shine,  
"And I would dream that it was endless Summer,  
"If you were mine; if you were mine.

Here he joined her in the singing, all his soul in the words:

"If you were mine,  
"The morning sun each day would give new glory,  
"While roses into garlands I would twine,  
"I know my life would tell a sweeter story,  
"If you were mine; just mine."

Here she stopped.

"What a silly little song," she said, but well she knew that it was an echo from a strong man's heart.

John had gotten his hat and put it on the table, before the song was begun, but he didn't put it on his head, when it was finished. It remained on the table and he followed Janice to the fire, drew a chair in front of it and told her to sit down. He drew up another chair and sat near her.

Then he asked: "What are your plans and hopes for the future?"

"Plans," she said, "I haven't any. Why should I make plans? In years gone by, I planned for a home and a long, glad life with Dick. You know what became of those plans, and hopes.—Oh! how many I had, and how sweet and roseate they were, but they are all dead. What have I to live for, to strive for now, but just my little child. All else that I have loved has been taken from me, and I try not to love her too well, fearing that I will lose her also."

"I wish you would let me plan some for you. I would plan for you a life, in which I would always be



with you, to love you, to care for you, to work for you. I would awaken new hopes in your heart, where those old ones so sadly died. Has it never occurred to you Janice, that I have loved you almost all your life? When you became Dick's wife, I tried to put this love out of my heart, and far away from me, for honor's sake and I tried to be happy because you were happy. When your troubles came, you can never know what comfort I found in trying to comfort you."

"And you John, can never know the help you gave me and the blessing you have been to me, and I can never by word or deed, make you know the depth of my gratitude to you for it all."

"Stop, don't speak of gratitude. It is not your gratitude I am begging for. It is your love. That is all that is worth anything to me and I am so lonely without it. Can't you try to love me, if it is only such a little bit? As you sang just now,—'I'd try to make this world like Heaven above you, if you were mine, just mine.' I'm going now. Think of what I have said to you and when you feel that you can care enough for me to let me come into this life near to you, tell me so, will you?"

"I will think of it, John. It is so new to me. I never dreamed of your caring for me in this way."

He took his hat then, and went home to dreams of her.

She sat long, when he had left her. She could think now of so many things he had said and done, that should have told her of his love long ago. A man like John should have all of the love of a woman's soul. "Could I give him all of mine," she asked herself and answered: "I think I could."



## CHAPTER XXIV.

A WHOLE week passed and John had not a glimpse of Janice or a word from her.

He was getting pretty low down in spirit. He had been thinking of her all day, wondering if there was to come no call from her to him. He concluded to stop work and walk down her way and if he didn't see her about the garden, he might go in.

Just as he put up his papers and locked his safe, Aunt Calline came bustling in, her face letting him know at once that she had something startling to tell.

Without any preliminaries, she asked. "Did you know that Janice Wynne's baby was mighty sick with dipthery? I've just come from thar, and it does look like that poor little woman has more trouble than any other livin' creetur. The child has been ailin' for a day or two, but Dr. Jones didn't know it was dipthery till to-day. She has a mighty high fever, is a-talkin' outen her head and I'm afeered it's a powerful bad case, You know everybody is afeered of the disease, and there's not a single person a-goin' thar to help Janice nuss her baby. I'm a-goin' home and milk Brindle and shet up my house and then I'm goin' back to stay all night."

As soon as she left John went to see about it. The doctor was still there, the anxious mother sitting by the bed, holding the baby's little hot hands. When the doctor left, John followed him out to get his opinion of the case, and it was not at all encouraging.

He went back to the room and stood beside her. She said: "Oh, John, my baby will die. Did I not tell you that I tried not to love her too much, fearing that she would be taken from me?"



"You must not despair Janice. Everything possible shall be done to save her. I told Dr. Jones to wire Dr. Ellis to come at once, and bring the best nurse he knew of with him. He has a fine reputation, has been very successful in his treatment of such cases; and a nurse who understands and can be right by all the time, is indispensable and will relieve you of so much responsibility. I will stay with you too and nothing shall be left undone. Try to look on the bright side. I feel sure that we can bring your baby through all right," and he took her hand between his two big strong ones and held it for a moment.

Dr. Ellis and the nurse arrived and went on duty next day, but nothing could induce Janice to leave the room for the rest she so much needed. Dr. Ellis stayed right beside her and met every advance of the disease and his reward came on the third day. There was a reaction and it soon became manifest that the crisis had been passed.

Janice, who had stood so bravely at her post, when there was little or no hope, when informed that a recovery was anticipated, became prostrated and was for two weeks extremely ill herself.

\* \* \* \* \*

The snow had melted from the hillside. The jonquils and other sweet Spring flowers were making bright the garden walks. The birds were splitting their throats with song in the plum trees. Janice was sitting by the window in a pretty wrapper, catching the fragrance that the breeze brought in.

John Neal came in and filled her lap with long sprays of yellow jasmine and pink buds of the crab-apple and large blue golden-centered violets from the woods.

"The Winter is over and gone," he said. "All Nature is putting on pretty garments and taking on new life and you must do the same, little woman."

"Yes, I think myself I must try to do this. I have



so much to be thankful for. God has indeed been good to me in giving me back my baby. I have friends too, you and Aunt Calline, the truest among them. I would seem ungrateful to selfishly repine and longer brood over my past troubles. I think I must discard my sombre garments and put on livelier tints and get out among my friends again and try to enjoy the many blessings that I still have left me. And you, John,—you have worried over us long enough. You've scarcely rested for almost a month for watching with me. You've let business and everything go. I am getting well now and you must go away for a while. You are almost as worn and wasted as is your troublesome patient."

"And what will become of this 'troublesome patient,' if I go off and leave her?"

"I am invited to visit a friend. I shall go to her next week, if I am strong enough. I think to get away from these rooms for a while will do me a great deal of good."

"Who is this friend you wish to visit?" and "How far away will you go?" he asked quickly.

"My friend is Aunt Calline, and she promises to give me her best and sunniest room and gallons of Brindle's rich, creamy milk and broiled Spring chicken and a daily ride on her gentle old gray horse. She says she will have my eyes as bright as evening stars, and my cheeks the color of a red, red rose and all of my old time energy and strength restored to me in one month's time. Just think of it!"

"Are you in earnest about it, this visit to Aunt Calline?"

"Indeed I am. As she would say, if I don't have a 'collapse,' I will go to her next Wednesday. I will be in the best of hands and you must go away at once. Promise me that you will."

"I will consider the matter," he said.

He went directly to Aunt Calline's cottage. He



hadn't been there for a long time and he wished to see what it promised in the way of comforts.

Aunt Calline met him at the door and took him in her best room. It was as neat as 'soft soap' and willing hands could make it. The chairs, with bright chintz covered cushions and bed with its snowy pillows and pretty patchwork covering, surely looked like anyone could rest and sleep well upon them.

"Do you really wish Janice and her baby to make you a visit? If you do, I think it just the right thing for her. You will know how to care for them. You are sensible and cheerful, the very woman to comfort and help her. I will bring her to you and then I am going off to find a pleasant place for a couple to spend a honeymoon," and he left her, laughing slyly.

He carried Janice and her little girl to Aunt Calline's according to agreement. After depositing them in her "company" room, he said: "Take good care of Janice for me, Aunt Calline, until I come for her," and to the old lady's surprise and Janice's embarrassment, he bent and kissed her on the forehead.



## CHAPTER XXV.

AUNT CALLINE kept every promise she had made. Brindle's rich milk stood to hand in a pretty pitcher, with a glass beside it and yellow-legged chickens were broiled as she only could broil them. She saddled and brought to the door each day the dependable old horse, so that Janice could have long rides down the lanes and across grassy meadows.

She never left her alone to think, but got out the books that she and Josiah had read together and laughed over, when they were young,—Major Jones' Courtship and Marriage and Samantha Billings, among them.

She told her of the early days of her married life, when she had made sacrifices and encouraged Josiah to lay up something for "a rainy day."

"I must tell you of our first meetin' and courtship," she said one evening, as she sewed rags for a new carpet that she intended to get in the old fashioned loom shortly. "It was shorely love at fust site with us. Mother dis-kivered late one evenin' that the karoseen can was empty. She wanted to have a quiltin' and had laid off to card the cotton for it after supper. She told me to run up to Mr. Wright's store whar we traded, and git the can filled. When I went in, I saw a new clerk behind the counter. He come forward with such a quick step and bowed so perlite-like and axed what he could do fer me. I thought he had the honestest look in his eyes and his hair waved in the purtiest sort o' way above his broad forred and it was jest the color of a ripe chestnut. I was fixed up real nice. I was a mighty proud gal, and allus went neat, ef I couldn't go fine. He



got the oil and tuck it plum' out to the street fer me and said he hoped I would call agin. Somehow I couldn't think of another thing that night, but that man and don't you think I hadn't more'n drapt asleep tell I was a-dreamin' about him. The next Sunday, when I got to Sunday-school, all o' the gals was a-talkin' about the new beau, that had come to town and a-wonderin' which one would ketch him. Every last one o' 'em had sot her cap fer him. While all this talk was a-goin' on, he come in with Mr. Wright and tuck a seat right across from us, I seen him a-lookin' my way every time I lifted my eyes, and I could feel the blood a-rushin' to my face continually. When Sunday-school was over, Mr. Wright brought him over and interduced him to us gals and told us we must look after him, fer he was jest a country boy and hadn't ever been away from his Ma before. He tuck my books and axed me to walk down to the spring for a fresh drink before meetin' begun. He went home with me after service and axed if he could call to see me Monday night. After that, he was what you might call 'my shadder.' Every chance he got, thar he was talkin' to me at the gate, or a-settin' in our company room a-singin' outen the same singin' book with me. I belonged to the quire and he jined too, and I tell you nobody could tetch him when it come to tribble. He told me I was a long way the purtiest gal in town and that he would a-quit plowin' long before he did, ef he had a-knowed I lived thar.

"But somehow, he didn't come right to the pint and ax me to marry him. All the gals got to teasin' me about him and axin' when the weddin' was a-comin' off, and a-sayin' there was a site o' courtin' a-goin' on for no marryin'. All my other beaus drapt off, quit a-comin' and jest give him the whole track. I begun to git worrid and a-wonderin' why he didn't speak his min' ef he had one and I decided it might be a good idea to sorter help him along a little, for mebbe he was afeered o' bein'



kicked. You know thar's lots o' men who'd rather be kicked by a mule than a woman, any day.

"Well, I decided I would send him a valentine. The stores didn't keep these fine valentines with naked boys a-shootin' at hearts and roses and forgetmenots and purty verses on 'em then, like they do now. We young folks had to make 'em for ourselves and write our own sentiments on 'em. I tuck an extry lot o' fat pine in the kitchen one evenin' and I didn't hurry to git through with the dishes, when supper was over. I wanted everybody to get off to bed. When everythin' got still, I wrote the verses I had been a-makin' up for a day or two, on a nice sheet o' paper and I tell you I wrote the purtiest I knowed how. I wrote in a little fine hand, with a lot o' flourishes and fancy crossing o' the T's and so on, and here's what I wrote:

"I often set and look at you  
"And wish that you was mine;  
"And I'm a-goin' to up and say so  
"In this here valentine."

"Ef you love me like I love you,  
"Don't hesitate a minit;  
"Just come and offer me yer hand,  
"And I'll put mine right in it."

I put it in a little envelope that I made outen a piece of blue paper that come in a box of Sedlitz powders and I mailed it soon in the mornin' before folks got to stirrin' round. That night before we got thro' with supper, I heered Josiah come up on the front porch. Ain't it quare how soon a gal will learn the step o' the man she is a-lovin'? She learns it so well, she can tell it from any other, no matter whar she hears it. I had put a light in the front room and powdered my face and ringed me some beau-ketchers on my forrid and put a red ribbon in my hair. I laid my Sunday worsted dress



on the bed in my room, so I could git in it in a hurry and when I heered Josiah's step on the porch, I slipped in my room, and got into that dress and flung a white zeffer shawl over my head and stole out the back way, went round the house and in the front door like I staid dressed up all the time.

"When I met Josiah, the fust thing I seen was the corner o' my valentine a-stickin' outen his coat pocket. He come right to me and held out his hand and without saying a word, I put my hand in his'n. He held on to it and led me out to the kitchen, whar Mother and Pap was still at supper and axed how long it would take to git ready fer a weddin'. It didn't take long, fer I know'd Josiah'd have a livin' to make and I'd have to help him and wouldn't need a lot o' finery.

"I made me a white dress to be married in and Pap give me a lilac silk for a second day dress. We got married Sunday and went out eight miles in the country to Josiah's Pa's, and Monday they give us an infair dinner. We then went back to town, Josiah to measurin' out karoseen agin and I to straightenin' things in our new home.

"You've got sleepy, Honey, hain't yer?"

"No, I'd like to hear more of your life, Aunt Calline. It is interesting to me."

"Well Honey, I spect, you'd better lay down now and I'll tell you some more mebbe to-morrow night."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next evening Janice was very eager to hear more of the life of her good old friend and the supper dishes were hardly out of the way before she was urging Aunt Calline to sit down and take up her story right where she left off the evening before.

“Well, let’s see, Honey, I believe we had got back home after our wedding trip. Well, we got on mighty well for poor folks. Josiah’s Pa give us a cow and a couple o’ shoats and Mother give us a churn and some chickens and a lot o’ other things, that a young couple needs in starting out. Josiah got his wages raised and we had about everything that was good fer us, I reckon.

“Now, jest when we got to bein’ so happy and prosperous, folks begun to talk about the war a-comin’. We didn’t believe much in it at fust,—but after a while it looked like it would be a fact. The boys begun to drill at night on the square and thar was speeches made in the Court House. One man told us we jest had to fight, it was all we could do; and another one told us to stand by the Yunnyun and the star-spangled banner. We wimmen folks all turned out to hear ’em. Ef there jest had to be a fight, it was to be ourn too.

“Josiah come home one night and sot down by the stove. I was jest a-puttin’ the biskit in to bake. He pulled me down on his knee and put his arm round my waist,—he could about span it then,—and he said in a solemn sort of a tone: ‘Calline, thar’s gwynne to be war, and it ain’t a-gwynne to be much of a picnic nuther. Most all the boys air a-gwynne. What do you think of



me a-jinin' 'em? 'My heart almost stopped beatin'. I put his hair back from his forrid and kissed it and I choked back my tears and tried to laugh a little and I said: 'Well, I reckon you'd better go long with the boys. You won't have anywhar to stay, fer you can't stay here with me if your country needs you. I've allus thought a man's fust duty was to his Maker, his next to his country and then his wife is entitled to a showin'. 'Yes, I guess you'll have to go.'

"I didn't eat a bite o' supper and Josiah tuck a mighty light one and we didn't say anuther word about the war that night. Soon it was all settled, we had to fight. About all the young men got ready to go. Some o' the older ones said they'd be on hand later. They wouldn't need all of 'em at once. It was like settin' up with the sick. Thar was allus plenty o' company early in the night, but company was allus scarce towards mornin'. I've had several hard jobs in my life, but the hardest one I ever had was gittin' Josiah ready fer the army. I put a plenty o' socks I had knit myself and good strong underwear up for him. I baked up a lot o' syrup cakes and bread. He started off with a plenty, ef he did come back nekked and hongry.

"The mornin' the boys started, they gathered on the square and had a speech from Col. Wynne, Dick's Pa. John Neal's Pa spoke too and presented a flag to 'em, that the ladies had made. The drum beat, the fife played Katie Darlin' and our boys marched away. I went in to my empty room and shot the door and knelt down by the bed. I axed the Lord to keep his eye on Josiah and His Strong arm about him and bring him back to me safe and sound, when his duty was done and I knowed He would do it.

"Josiah was in many a battle. The shot and shell fell thick around him, but when the smoke cleared away, thar he was ready to load and fire agin. Many a night he laid on the ground, with nothin' warmer to kiver him



than the stars above and a blanket o' snow. I tried to git him to jine a 'Critter Company,' as the boys called the cavalry. You see, while I was shore he would never turn his back to the Yankees, till thar was nuthin' else he could do, ef sech a thing did come about, I wanted him to have as quick transpertation as was to be had, but he stuck to his home company. He was never in the horsepittle but two days and never axed fer a furrow. One night, as he sot by the camp-fire writin' to me, his Cap'n axed him ef he didn't git homesick. He told him that he would ruther see Calline that night than anything on the yearth, except the war over and victory perched on that Confederate banner. Well, his Cap'n told him he could make a visit home ef he felt that-a-way. He didn't let me know he was a-comin'. I had been a-thinkin' about him more than usual one day and towards night I tuck a baskit and went out to the tater-bank to git some taters to chip up and parch to make coffee out of. I got some little ones. I kept the big ones to fry. Jest as I started back to the house, I heered somebody say: 'Them's mighty poor little stringy taters you've growed, Calline,' and thar he was a-peepin' at me thro' the fence. I drapped all the taters and hopped over that fence and put my arms around his neck, a-laughin' and a-cryin' all at the same time. I'd a-never a-picked this time to have his picture tuck, fer he was about the sorriest specimen I had ever sot eyes on. I didn't let a soul know that night that he had come. I wanted him all to myself and I wanted to dress him up a little better too. I had made him a new suit and I was a-gwynne to send it to him the fust chance I got. Nex' mornin' he put it on and we went in town. He had letters and messages from the boys he had left behind, for their home-folks.

"I wanted to make his visit a happy one, so I decided to give him a party before he went back. I made a lot o' soggum cakes and tater and apple pies and so on and



put 'em away in the cupboard. Jest then, I heered a loud scream out in the street and I run to the front door to see what was the matter and I seen about a dozen Yankees a-comin' right in at the gate. I slammed the door and run back in the house and I met Josiah a-comin' a-fallin' over the churn and cheers and everythin' else that got in his way. He had seen a squad of 'em a-gittin' over the back fence.

"Git in the bed and kiver up," I told him and I got my night cap from under the piller and told him to put it on. He went under the kiver and done jest like I told him and I sorter got my wits together jest as one Yankee stepped in. He stopped close to the door and axed me who that was in the bed and right then and thar I told the fust downright lie I ever told in my life. I had been cornered a few times and had to beat round the bush a little, but this time, I helt up my head and told a plum' lie, a lie outen the whole cloth.

"That's my poor old sick mother," I said. I seen Josiah's foot and breeches leg a-pokin' out from under the kiver and I was afeered the Yankee would see it too, but he somehow didn't.

"What ails your old mammy?" he then axed me. I seen Josiah a-tremblin' and a-shakin' the bed close and I up and told anuther lie (jes' like folks allus do. One lie allus calls fer anuther.)

"She's a-chillin'," I said. I was a-shakin' too and he said it looked like to him that I was a-chillin' too. 'What yer got ter eat already cooked,' he axed me. I told him it want my time o' day fer cookin' and he said it was his time o' day fer eatin' and that if I didn't git bizzy and give him as good a meal as I had in the d—d shop, he would use a mighty good persuader, that he kept in his belt handy, on me.

"When he said this, my 'poor old sick Mammy' jumped outen that bed with that night cap on, picked up a cheer and laid him out on the floor. I was skeered to



death for Josiah, but about that time I heered a yell outside,—the first time I ever heered the rebel yell,—and our own boys in gray come a-runnin' in. They made a prisoner of my perlite visiter, stayed over night among us all, and we had the party. We had old Tom, our blind fiddler, to tune up his fiddle and we had a dance, that the purty gals of the village and the boys in gray remembered for many a day.

“The war didn't end like we wanted it to, Honey, but God let it end as it did and I recon it was the right way. I'll have to be a lot more knowin' and far-seein' than I am, to put my jedgment up agin His'n.

“Josiah got home from the war, when it was all over. We lived twenty-five years o' happiness together, for which I've allus bin thankful and then after passin' through four years o' fightin' and exposure and never—bein' tetched, he laid down peacefully in his bed, and died with the numony,—strange, wasn't it?”



## CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER John left Janice with Aunt Calline, he went to a quiet place in the mountains and rested for a couple of weeks. He then went into the City and attended to a business matter, that he should have looked after earlier.

While there, he bought himself some new clothes; he also bought a diamond ring, that was too small for his smallest finger and he put it in a little white kid box and put that in his vest pocket, after which he turned his face homeward.

When within a mile of town, he recognized Aunt Calline's "ridin' nag," with Janice mounted on her back, coming down the hill. The little woman was wonderfully improved. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks, not quite as red as a rose, but with a tint in them that deepened when she saw him coming.

She turned back with him. He took her from the horse's back and placed her on the step and asked Aunt Calline if she would give him a plate at supper.

He went home to find Edith to welcome him and there he made a toilet, as he told her, to go a-courting. He put on his prettiest tie and combed his hair three different ways before it suited him. He got into his new suit and pinned a rose on his coat and went back to Aunt Calline's where he found Janice setting the table and the old lady basting one of "Carrie Nation's offspring" with butter and pepper. They took their supper, after which they sat in the company room, where a small fire blazed cheerfully.

"Did you find a nice place to spend a honeymoon,



John?" asked Aunt Calline, when she had gotten her knitting needles going.

"A dandy place," he answered.

"When air you goin' thar to spend it?"

"Let me see,—this is May, I think I'll go in the middle of October. It is a pretty place up in the hills. The leaves will be taking on their gorgeous tints in October. The nuts will be ripening and the air will be crisp and invigorating. Cheerful wood fires will be in order, and my sweetheart will be well and strong, able to take long gallops through pretty lanes and climbs to hill-tops to witness lovely sunsets."

"Stop and tell me who is your sweetheart and how long you've bin ingaged," said the old lady, laying down her knitting.

He drew his chair close to Janice and taking her hand, he said: "Here is the lady of my love and I'm going to be engaged in a half a minute, if she will allow me to put this ring upon her dainty hand." He had taken the ring, that he bought while away, from his vest pocket and held it,—waiting.

"Put it on," she said and then the promise of Aunt Calline was made good, for her cheeks became indeed like a red, red rose.

A glad light brightened all his face and he said: "At last, after all the long years of weary waiting, I am happy, as I never was before, as I never dared hope to be,—and it is settled,—the wedding day will be the 12th of October. It was my mother's wedding day. We will build us a home on the crest of the hill beyond the school-house where I first found and learned to love you Janice, and there we will begin a new life."

"No, John, I must remain where I have lived all of my life. Some of the happiest as well as the saddest days of my life have been spent there. Every room in the house and every foot of ground in the garden, are sacred and dear to me. I would never see strangers going in



and out there without pain. We will do over the house and you shall use your own taste and make it beautiful for me, as you made the home for Edith and there we will begin the new and God grant, the happy life for us both. You will be kind and true to me. You could never be anything else and you will love me always and I—I will love you, too and be to you a good and faithful wife.”

In the last month of Summer, the “buildin’ boom,” as Aunt Calline said, when old Ben, the shoemaker, added a “lean-to” to his shebang and Dr. Jones built a new chicken house and John Neal added two rooms and run his “‘mirander’ around the house,” struck the town again. Two new rooms were added to Janice Wynne’s house. It was painted and decorated and prettily furnished and sure enough on the 12th day of October, there was a wedding.

After a wedding breakfast, John Neal and his bride went up in the hills and spent a part of their honeymoon, It didn’t end there, for they came back, he to a life as happy as a life can be and she to realize all that a “life must be in a home like this, the wife of a man like John.”

“And still a rainbow’s bending,  
“When the storm has rolled away;  
“And God’s love is unending,  
“And the dark drifts into day.”







# BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO'S

## NEWEST BOOKS

All Bound in Silk Cloth and Gilt. Many Illustrated

### Fiction

The Eyes at the Window (beautifully bound, with embossed jacket)—Olivia Smith Cornelius.....	\$1.50
Next-Night Stories—C. J. Messer.....	1.25
Arthur St. Clair of Old Fort Recovery—S. A. D. Whipple.....	1.50
Barnegat Yarns—F. A. Lucas.....	1.00
Jean Carroll, with six illustrations—John H. Case	1.50
As a Soldier Would—Abner Pickering.....	1.50
The Nut-Cracker, and Other Human Ape Fables—C. E. Blanchard, M.D.....	1.00
Moon-Madness, and Other Fantasies—Aimée Crocker Gouraud (5th ed.).....	1.00
Sadie, or Happy at Last—May Shepherd.....	1.50
Tweed, a Story of the Old South—S. M. Swales..	1.50
The White Rose of the Miami—Mrs. E. W. Ammerman.....	1.50
The Centaurians—Biagi.....	1.50
The Reconstruction of Elinore Wood—Florenz S. Merrow.....	1.50
A Nest of Vipers—Morgan D. Jones.....	1.50

### Religious Works

The Disintegrating Church—Frederick William Atkinson.....	1.00
Evolution of Belief—J. W. Gordon.....	1.50
Down Hill and Up Hill—Rev. J. G. Anderson..	2.00
A Certain Samaritan—Rev. John Richelsen.....	1.00
The Reunion of Christendom—Francis Goodman	1.50
What the Church Is and What It Should Be—Lafayette Swindle.....	1.50
A Harp of the Heart. (Poems)—Rev. Chas. Coke Woods.....	1.00
The Gospel Parables in Verse—Rev. Christopher Smith.....	.75
Who? Whence? Where? An Essay by Pedro Batista.....	1.00
Compendium of Scriptural Truths—Marshall Smith.....	1.25
The Passion Play at Ober Ammergau—Esse Esto Maplestone.....	1.00
Israel Lo Ammi—Ida M. Nungasser.....	1.00



The Eternal Evangel—Solomon S. Hilscher.....	\$1.50
A New Philosophy of Life—J. C. Coggins.....	1.00
Romance of the Universe—B. T. Stauber.....	1.50
In the Early Days—Adelaide Hickox.....	1.50
The New Theology—By a Methodist Layman— Hamilton White.....	1.00

### Miscellaneous

Anvil Sparks—Radical Rhymes and Caustic Comments, by Wilby Heard.....	.75
The Medical Expert and Other Papers—Louis J. Rosenberg.....	.50
The Little Sufferers (dealing with the Abuses of the Children's Societies)—G. Martin.....	1.50
Eureka, a Prose Poem—S. H. Newberry.....	1.00
Rust (a play in four acts)—Algernon Tassin (of Columbia University).....	1.00
Poems by Charles Guinness.....	1.00
Prohibition and Anti-Prohibition — Rommel, Ziegler & Herz.....	1.00
Gay Gods and Merry Mortals—Verse by Robert J. Shores.....	1.00
The Rubaiyat of the College Student—Ned Nafe.....	.50
The Deluge of England, and Other Poems—James Francis Thierry.....	1.00
The Dragon's Teeth—a Philosophical and Eco- nomic Work—T. M. Sample.....	1.00
Achsah, the Sister of Jairus—Mabel Cronise Jones.....	1.00
The Marriage Bargain Counter—Daisy Deane..	1.50
Building a New Empire—Nathaniel M. Ayers..	1.50
Marriage and Divorce—Jeanette Laurance.....	1.00
The Clothespin Brigade—Clara L. Smiley.....	.75
"Forget It"—Ida Von Claussen.....	1.50
The Last Word: a Philosophical Essay—James and Mary Baldwin.....	1.00

### Travel

Eight Lands in Eight Weeks (illustrated by 90 drawings)—Marcia P. Snyder.....	1.25
Eliza and Etheldreda in Mexico—Patty Guthrie (illustrated).....	1.25

The attention of clergymen is directed to our Religious List, one of the largest of any house in America.

Write for free copy of our magazine, BOOK CHAT.

**BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO., 835 BROADWAY, N. Y.**

Branch Offices:

ATLANTA BALTIMORE INDIANAPOLIS NORFOLK  
WASHINGTON DES MOINES, IOWA















**MAY 16 1913**







